





THE

# RUSSIAN EMPIRE:)

Historical and Descriptive.

*By*

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## Preface.



IF there is a country that bears its history impressed on its surface and on the character of its people, that country is Russia. To the traveller from the west, Russian scenery, away from the great towns, has a forlorn, half-savage aspect, as of a land that is only being reclaimed from a state of nature. To understand why this is so, he must keep in mind not alone the harshness of the climate and the sparseness of the population, but also the fact that the tillers of the soil, as a class, are more poor and ignorant and superstitious than the peasantry of the other Christian countries of Europe; that till a few years ago they were serfs, bought and sold with the land; and that even to-day they have scarcely begun to enjoy or appreciate the blessings of true liberty. To know why the bulk of the Russian people are so far in the wake of civilization, one must dip a little into the national history.

It has been thought well, therefore, in an account of the Russian Empire, to embody a sketch of its historical development. Instead of seeking to describe the various provinces in any geographical order, it has been attempted roughly to follow the process of growth by which, from small beginnings, the dominions of the Czar have reached their present vast proportions. The planting of the germs of power in the forests of Novgorod,

the quarrels of rival principalities on the Dnieper, the conquests of the half-Tartar czarate on the Volga, the ambitious strivings of the modern state which Peter established on the Neva, and the restless aggressions and annexations that have marked her more recent history, may be seen to have each had its several influence in producing that wonderful social and political phenomenon—the Russia of to-day. In giving some popular idea of that phenomenon there may probably be found, notwithstanding the care taken to avoid them, errors in the grouping, in proportion, and in conception and presentation of facts; and for excuse, reference can only be made to the vast dimensions of the subject and the extreme multiplicity of the details.

But the past of Russia, besides explaining its present, is of the highest importance in interpreting its future—a subject which recent events have helped to make matter of painful conjecture. It is clear that this great country has reached a crisis in its fate. The three chief powers to be reckoned with, it would seem, are a corrupt military bureaucracy, that has almost said its last word—that is clearly moving towards bankruptcy and ruin; a people still almost dumb and blind, and only half-conscious that they have rights and grievances; and a party of wild political dreamers, strong as yet only by reason of desperation, that seek, as the sole panacea for the ills of society, the total destruction of order and law. What will be the issue of the struggle for Russia it is impossible almost to guess; before it, as a French writer has said, there rises “an immense note of interrogation.”

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# RUSSIA IN EUROPE

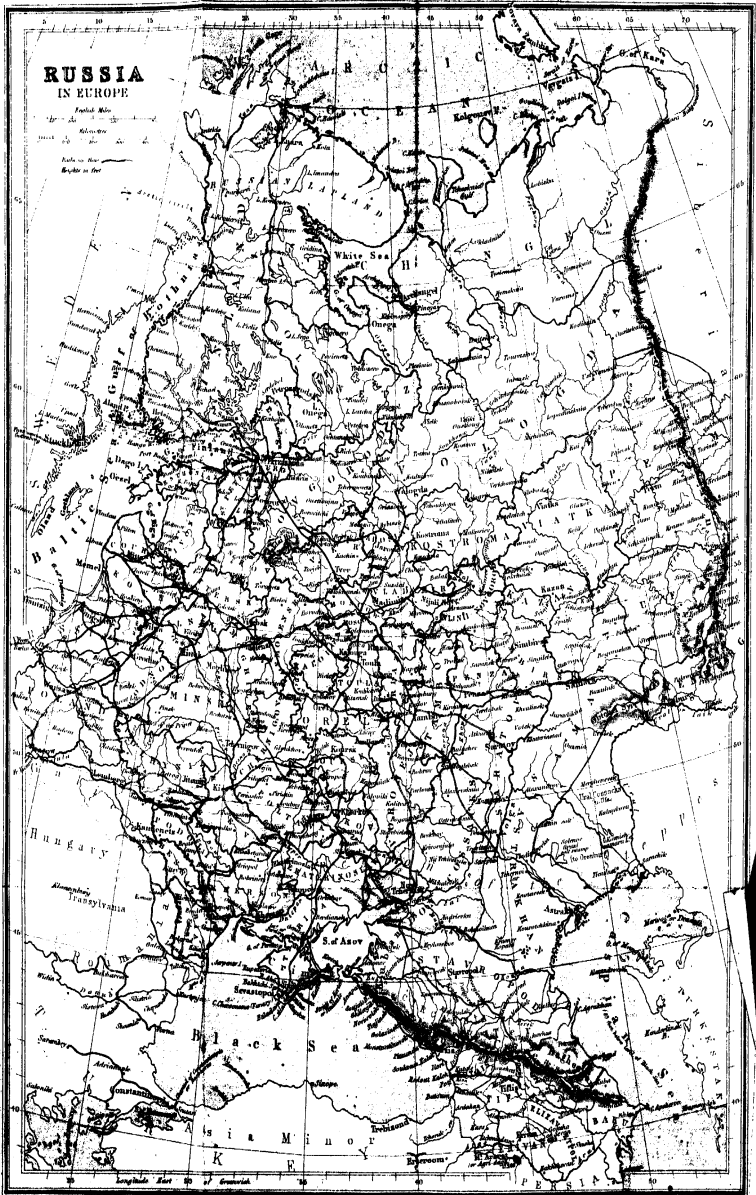
Political Map

Scale in Miles

Scale in Kilometers

Scale in Nautical Miles

Scale in Statute Miles






# THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE GROWTH OF TWO CENTURIES.

F the courteous reader were to turn to some old map of the world, say of two hundred years ago, and compare it with the earth as we know it to-day, perhaps the change of all others which would strike him as most marvellous would be the enormous development of the Russian Empire. The face of Europe has been metamorphosed. Powerful states have disappeared, and others whose names two centuries ago were scarcely known have risen into prominent rank among the Great Powers. The vast colonial empire of Britain was then only being founded; and England had yet barely a foothold in India. The great North American Republic had yet a century to wait before its time came to step forth on the stage of history. The coast of Australia had been merely sighted; the Mississippi still rolled its waters from their source to the sea through an almost unexplored wilderness; California was believed to be an island. But incon-

ceivably great as have been the changes which these facts reveal, the most "portentous birth" of latter times, at least in its imposing magnitude, must be pronounced to be the Empire of the White Czar.

When this country was achieving its "Revolution," and laying down on firm lines the foundations of its national progress and its constitutional liberty, Russia—Muscovy, as our forefathers would have called it—was a semi-Asiatic state, still thickly crusted with the rust of barbarism. Few dreamed of its future destiny, though its progress had already been rapid and continuous. It counted for little more in the European "balance of power" than the Empire of Morocco does to-day, and was indeed scarcely classed among the European family of nations. It was still to all intents and purposes an inland state, with no commerce save what was carried through the territories of its neighbours. The Kingdom of Poland had not only a sea-board on the Baltic, but ports on the Black Sea. The Mohammedan Khanate of Crim-Tartary interposed between the southern margin of Muscovy and the Euxine. Fierce, independent Circassian and Tartar tribes held the country between the Don and the Caucasus. Sweden possessed not Finland alone, but Livonia, Esthonia, and the site of the modern capital of the Czars. Towards the north, on the shores of the White Sea, the rulers of Moscow had indeed an outlet to the ocean; but this, and all the channels leading to it, were closed during the long months of the Arctic winter.

To the eastward the limits of the empire were less well defined. The Czars held as much as they were able of the ground roamed over by the nomad tribes of

the Siberian steppes, and lost no opportunity of tightening their grasp on these loose possessions, and pushing their frontier to the east and the south. The ruler of Moscow was content at first to govern these wild peoples with a slack rein, and exact a very light tribute, if they were but willing to make nominal acknowledgment of his suzerainty. And so the empire enlarged itself almost insensibly, or at least almost unobserved, until Cossack conquest and discovery had, in the course of a few generations, carried the boundary of the Czars' dominions eastward to the shores of Behring Strait and southward to the Altai chain and the river Amoor.

Before Peter the Great's days, however, it is doubtful whether even the Russians themselves knew much of the region beyond the present limits of Europe. Not much more than a century had elapsed since they had shaken themselves clear, after a desperate struggle prolonged through three hundred years, from the yoke of the Tartars of the Golden Horde. It was not till the overthrow of the Mongol Khanates of Kazan and Astrakhan by Ivan the Terrible, in the second half of the sixteenth century, that the Russian dominions were carried as far as the Volga and the Caspian Sea, and the princes of Muscovy thought themselves entitled to assume the name of "Czar." Their knowledge of the regions beyond the Ural chain and to the east of the Caspian must have been vague, and their interest in them probably not very keen.

But to the peoples of Western Europe — even to the learned, among them — Siberia and the countries of Central Asia were still almost a *terra incognita*

two hundred years back. As in the days of the Greek and Roman geographers, these remote regions were the abodes of myths and chimeras. The few ascertained facts were distorted by fear and prejudice and by the mists of uncertain distance. The fabulous races with which the old world writers had peopled Inner Scythia had indeed disappeared from the maps. No one now had faith in the existence of the war-loving Amazons; of tribes that once a year were transformed into were-wolves, and roamed through the gloom of the northern forests with the lust of blood and slaughter glowing in their red eyes; of races that were bald-headed from birth to old age, or who devoured their parents to save the expense of burying them. The man-eaters by the Arctic Seas, the one-eyed Arimaspians who contended with the winged griffon for the possession of the Mines of Gold, the dog-headed people, or that still stranger headless race with a single eye planted in the middle of the breast who inhabited the innermost recesses of the desert, had been relegated to the realm of poetry and fable. Only a few enthusiastic imaginations still cherished the idea of the Riphæan Mountains, with their impenetrable wall of snow, behind which, "at the back of the north wind," dwelt the venerable Hyperboreans in the practice of all the virtues and in the enjoyment of eternal calm, in a region where the feathery snow-flakes fell continually, and day succeeded night at intervals of six months.

The names and something of the character and habitat of several of the more important of the tribes of Northern Asia were known; but concerning their geographical and political relations and their race affinities

only the vaguest notions were afloat. A comparatively short time had elapsed since these fierce barbarians had precipitated themselves on Europe and laid it waste up to the walls of Liegnitz; and the flood of Tartar invasion had barely ebbed back within the limits of Asia when Czar Peter began to reign. The natural tendency was to make an exaggerated estimate of their numbers and their destructive power; and so the picture that stamped itself upon the popular fancy regarding the northern and central parts of Asia, and which has continued to be more or less distinctly impressed there down to the present day, is that of an illimitable waste, grim, hungry, and forbidding, and yet, in spite of its barrenness, holding within its savage girdle of mountains myriads of outlandish races with high cheek-bones and obliquely-set eyes, who are continually engaged in furious strife with each other, but who might at any moment unite their forces and pour in a resistless torrent over Europe or India.

Marco Polo's famous account of his journey across Asia to the court of the great Kublai Khan at Peking, and through the length and breadth of the Middle Kingdom, was still the chief repository of facts relating to this part of the world; and so vague was the information possessed even by the learned two centuries ago, that we find the whole region north of the Oxus and east of the Ural Mountains, comprehending modern Siberia and Turkestan, slumped together as "Grand Tartary." So inadequate was the conception of the enormous extension of Asia to the northward and eastward, that the Dutch and English navigators who strove for more than a century—from 1553 to 1676—

to discover a "north-east passage" to China and India by coasting the Arctic shores of Russia, imagined that if they could only round the cape to the south of Vaygatz Strait, opposite Novaya Zemlia, and on the frontier of Europe and Asia, they might then turn their vessel's head to the south-east and sail directly to Cathay and the Islands of Spice, and thus completely outdistance their Spanish and Portuguese rivals in the Eastern Seas, who had to make the long voyage by the Cape of Good Hope or Cape Horn. That this ignorance of the actual outline of the Russian Empire continued down to our own day was proved by Nordenskiöld, who in his memorable exploit of threading the long-sought-for North-East Passage, and circumnavigating for the first time the continents of the Old World, sailed over tracts of sea which were laid down in the maps as dry land, and found a bold and high coast where he had been led to expect a navigable ocean.

But the knowledge possessed by the rest of Europe regarding the true kinship and character of the Russian people themselves, and of the nature and strength of the power wielded by the Czar of Muscovy, was scarcely less ill defined than that as to the vast supplementary empire that was growing up in Asia. The early glories of Novgorod and Kiev, when the Grand Princes espoused daughters of the Emperors of the East, and were united by marriage with half the crowned heads of Europe, had been obscured or forgotten in the long night of Tartar domination that followed the invasion of the Golden Horde.

It is true that, having at length thrown off the yoke of its barbarian masters, the young Muscovite power bounded along the course marked out for it with

gigantic strides. But it had a long leeway to make up. It had to work "overtime," as it were, to bring itself into the same field with its more favoured western competitors. While it was struggling almost despairingly for national existence, they had been passing through rapid changes in their political, social, and intellectual development. Paganism and Mohammedanism were round it on three sides, and in its midst. The race, like the land, was in the primitive stages of cultivation. The intelligence of the people was obscured by the grossest superstitions. The necessity of constantly watching and encountering their terrible Mongol foes turned their faces towards the dark east instead of westward, where the new light was rising. Their political relations were with Asia rather than with Europe. Other countries had long ago received, and more or less successfully absorbed, all the constituent elements of their nationalities. Celts, Teutons, and Slavs had already taken up their appointed places, and were busy adjusting questions of precedence.

Russia, however, was still within the flood-mark of barbarism. The exodus of the nations from Central Asia—the process that had been going on from the earliest beginnings of history, when we see Cimmerians pushed forward by Scythians, Issedones treading on the heels of Massagetæ, and political convulsions within the Wall of China sweeping away the decaying barriers of the Roman Empire, and pouring hosts of Goths, Huns, and Vandals into Europe—was still in active operation there. As had been the case for centuries, these Eastern Slavs had to bear the first shock of the charge of the Asiatic hosts. No sooner was one tribe overthrown

than the way was left open for another and still stronger that came on in its turn, to be in turn absorbed or exterminated.

Russia was therefore constantly acquiring from without, by the westward movement of population and the eastward extension of her frontiers, vast additions to her stock of inhabitants. And these were no longer, as in the earlier immigrations, Aryan peoples of her own kin, but races of Turanian or semi-Turanian origin, half-savage Finnish, Mongol, and Turkish tribes, hard of assimilation into a stable and well-governed state. She managed to incorporate them. The Russians have a great natural talent in that direction. Their stage of progress was not so far removed from that of the peoples whom they absorbed as to prevent them from mingling with them easily and on equal terms. The process of the "Russification" of these alien nations has been a rapid and effectual one, and has no parallel in the history of British colonization; but it has, as a matter of course, considerably impeded the social progress of the Russian people.

On the other hand, while Russia's political outlook had been towards Asia, her culture and religion, such as they were, had been derived from Constantinople. This fact has had a most powerful influence on the national life and character, and has formed a main part of the great wall of division separating Russia from the knowledge and sympathy of the rest of Europe. Not only were there the antagonism of race and religion, and the difficulties of an unknown language, and even alphabet, to overcome, but Russia had adopted another type of civilization, a different standard of taste and morals from



her neighbours in the west. Peter the Great was the first who thoroughly understood the great loss that his country suffered from this isolation, or at least he was the first who had the far-seeing sagacity and boldness to set himself with all his might to break down the barriers. Russia had still no foothold on the Baltic. The site of the great capital, which is the most magnificent and enduring memorial of Peter's superb ambition, was a lonely marsh, which had still to be won from the Swede, and that Swede no other than Charles the Twelfth. He chose this spot for the seat of his court and the centre of his power, and he called it "the window" by which Russia would see into Europe, and learn the lesson of progress. It has been in scarcely a less degree a window by which Europe has peered into the interior gloom of Russia, and with a half-sympathetic, half-apprehensive feeling has watched its wonderful brightening. If the heart of Russia still beat at Moscow, her eye and brain, her perceptive and intellectual faculties, were removed to St. Petersburg. She had become at length a European power; and she attracted to herself more and more of the curiosity and wonder of the world, as she strode on from conquest to conquest, while the solid development of her internal strength and the progressive enlightenment of her people almost kept pace with her vast aggrandizements to north, south, east, and west.

We have learned much regarding the Russian land and people since we have been thus brought face to face with them. Scores of observers have noted the peculiarities of the government, religion, and social life. Tourists may now travel with ease from one end to the other of the European possessions of the Czar; while

enterprising explorers have penetrated into the remotest corners of his vast Asiatic domains. More important than all, a national literature has arisen, in which we can read more clearly than in a thousand descriptions what are the aspirations and the mental characteristics of the race.

Yet it cannot be said that we know Russia and its people thoroughly, or even well. It is so colossal and so complicated a phenomenon that is presented to us, that it is not easy to fix an adequate picture of it in the mind. From the Danube to Behring Strait, from Archangel to Samarcand, what a "multitude of all peoples and tongues and nations that no man can number" are comprised within the bounds of the Russian Empire! Within are found representatives of all the northern and eastern and of many of the southern and western races of the Old World. Every phase of civilization, from the highest to the most primitive, and nearly every variety of religion—Christian, Jewish, Mohammedan, Buddhist, and pagan—are represented. Dr. Latham, as the result of his ethnological studies, which he admits to be imperfect, has reckoned up no fewer than forty-seven "non-Russian" races dwelling within the bounds of Russia proper. In Asia, and in the Polish, Circassian, and other alien European provinces, there are at least as many more. And in customs, costumes, and languages there is almost as much variety as in race and religion. The empire of the White Czar is the bond of union between two great continents, which are otherwise sharply opposed to each other in every physical and mental feature. It leans on one side against the great Wall of China, and neighbours on the other side with Germany; and it

shades away so insensibly from Western progress and culture to Oriental immobility, that it is impossible to put down the finger anywhere, and say, "Here Asia begins."

Not less striking is the diversity of scenery comprehended within the Russian Empire. Busy sea-ports on the Baltic and Euxine, with quays lined with steamers and crowded with merchandise, and trackless Mongolian wastes, where the solitary traveller may ride for many days without encountering a human habitation; garish new cities, where streets and boulevards and the costumes of the people smack of the latest Parisian taste, and decaying seats of Tartar and Uzbeg power, whose ancient magnificence is crumbling into dust; waving corn-fields stretching for hundreds of square leagues over the "Black Lands" of the Dnieper and Boug, and dreary tracts by the Arctic Sea, where it is impossible to tell where the frozen plain ends and the ice-field begins; white winter landscapes, where the ringing sledge speeds along under the keen stars and the snow-covered branches of the pines, and the soft steady tramp of the wolves is heard in the distance, and Khi-van deserts, where the blazing sun shines down on the fainting camel-drivers, as they toil through the hot sands; squat Laplanders and Samoyedes driving their reindeer to the pasture; Kamschadales putting out to sea in their frail kajaks, in chase of the walrus and the seal; hardy lumbermen descending the northern rivers in their huge rafts of larch and fir trees; Yakut fur trappers following the tracks of silver fox and marten across the snow; sturgeon-fishers landing their mighty prize on the shores of the Volga and the Don; Turco-

mans and Kipchaks riding forth on marauding and kidnapping expeditions; Kalmuk and Kirghiz shepherds watching their flocks on the steppe, with their guns conveniently at hand; Caucasian mountaineers leaping from crag to crag in chase of ibex and chamois; uncouth Mantchurian merchants bringing their bales of silk and brick-tea to the Russian markets; Cossack colonists on disturbed and distant frontiers, where the settler has to till the ground with arms in his hand; dark and mysterious scenes of suffering endured by exiles in the Siberian mines; peaceful log-built villages in Central Russia, where the vastest social and political revolutions produce scarcely a ripple on the even current of peasant life; court splendours and great military displays; the interior of Christian churches, Mohammedan mosques, and Buddhist temples; mighty rivers, interminable marshes, and great salt and fresh water lakes; deserts of salt and shingle and sand and snow; vast forests, boundless grassy plains, and lonely Alpine peaks;—these and a hundred other pictures equally startling in their contrast rise before the mind when the name of Russia is mentioned.

But, after all, considering the stupendous area it covers, it is not diversity, but rather uniformity, even monotony, that is the distinguishing characteristic of the empire of Russia. Bulky though it is—stretching through one hundred and sixty degrees of longitude, and from far within the Arctic Circle to semi-tropical lands—it is one great whole, not only having continuity of extent, but uniformity of natural features. Compared with Western Europe, and even Southern Asia, it is a solid mass of land, indented to only a small extent by arms of the sea, and less dependent upon or connected with the

ocean than any other territory of similar extent. M. Rambaud, in his "History of Russia," has on this account described the region west of the Ural Mountains as the "Continental Europe," as distinguished from "Maritime Europe." Another physical peculiarity has suggested the name of "Europe of the Plains," as contrasted with "Europe of the Mountains," applied to the countries to the westward. Unlike its neighbours, Russia has a mountain girdle, but no mountain system. The Caucasus, the Urals, the Carpathians, the plateau of Finland, have been termed its frame—its limits, as laid down by nature; but within these bounds, and that of the seas that wash its shores, there is scarcely an eminence worthy of the name of a hill. The rivers draining to the Black Sea and the Caspian, and those flowing to the Baltic and the Arctic Ocean, take their rise at an elevation of a few hundred feet above sea-level. In a large measure the still more extensive territory of Siberia is a counterpart of European Russia. Except in its eastern parts, its great ranges of mountains are on its frontiers; but there is this important difference, that the drainage of the rivers and the slope of the country are towards the north and the Frozen Ocean.

If Russia, however, has not mountains to break up her unity and form natural barriers between her peoples, she has abundance of mighty streams. Few countries are so well favoured in regard to deep and navigable rivers. The Obi, the Yenisei, the Lena, the Volga, the Don, and the Dnieper are all rivers of the first rank, whose courses from source to mouth are within her borders. Many of their tributaries are great rivers over a thousand miles in length; while a score of inde-

pendent streams could be mentioned that excel in size any of the rivers of Western Europe. Besides these, Russia has frontier rivers of historic note—the Danube, the Amoor, and the Oxus—scarcely inferior in volume to those that have been mentioned. But in the winter the Russian land is “one and indivisible.” An Arctic climate reigns from Lapland to the Kirghiz Steppe, and from St. Petersburg to Kamschatka. The temperature rushes from one extreme to another. The Polar air-currents and the hot winds from the sandy deserts east of the Caspian have alike an uninterrupted sweep across the level plains. Archangel has its broiling sun and its clouds of mosquitoes during its short summer; while at Odessa and Astrakhan the mercury ranges many degrees below zero in the winter months. The rivers are then all ice-bound, and the inequalities of the land are smoothed over by the universal covering of snow.

These common conditions of climate and surroundings have had an incalculable influence on the spread of the Russian nation, and in welding out of many materials one massive whole. For as with the land, so with the people: while there are endless varieties and contrasts, there is a wonderful agreement in the general type. The quaint and curious diversities that are presented by Georgian and Sart, Kalmuk and Eskimo, are only, as it were, the gay party-coloured fringing that surrounds the sober-hued web of the Russian nationality. As the rod of Aaron swallowed up the rods of the magicians of Egypt, so the Slav stock has absorbed Ugrian aborigines and Turk and Tartar immigrants, and seems little changed, except in bulk, by the process. The surroundings of the race have fostered their colonizing spirit. There has been

little to fasten them to their homes, and they have gone on and on in search of further conquest and happier fortunes. Their pioneers, so long as they saw no bounds to their horizon, have pushed steadily forward, hewing out for themselves new heritages in the forests of the north, and spreading their name and their creed over the steppe lands of the south. It is computed that sixty million of the inhabitants of the Russian Empire are of the Russian race. If their blood is not unmixed with foreign infusions, there can be no question of the force and purity of their national sympathies. At least, as large a proportion speak the Russian tongue and profess the national religion.

Here is a broad and solid basis for an empire's greatness to rest upon; capable, one would fancy, of sustaining almost any shock from without or from within. But the autocratic power that guides the destinies of Russia has not been content to retain it within its natural frontier. Military ambition and an unwise passion for aggrandizement have carried it into regions where, so far as can be seen, it can reap no permanent benefit, and where its presence arouses the suspicions of its neighbours. At the same time, the nation, stimulated by the great act of Serf Emancipation, is awakening to political life. It appears to be growing weary of parental government, and impatient of the myriad official bonds by which its freedom of action is controlled. It will by-and-by demand, and will obtain, a share in controlling its own destinies. Many fear that the awakening has come too early, before the nation has received its sight, and that if left to itself it will stumble forward, like a blind Samson, to a mysterious fate that will wreck its mighty strength.

At all events, Russia is approaching a crisis of its history which must intensify our interest in everything that concerns it. Old problems and new are waiting for solution on terms and on a scale never before witnessed. Despotism and Communism are in the same boat, and around them are the angry and rising waters of popular passion. It will be of interest as we pass from end to end of the vast Russian dominion, noting its present aspects and seeking to understand its present condition, to glance from time to time at the beginnings of this unique and portentous power, undoubtedly the rival, but by no means necessarily the opponent, of Britain, and to mark the process of development which has made it what it is.



## CHAPTER II.

### GREAT NOVGOROD AND ITS NEIGHBOURS.



THREE hundred versts—some two hundred miles—south-east of the city of St. Petersburg is a short range of hills which the Russians call the Valdai Mountains. They would not be mountains in any other country than Russia, for their summits rise little more than three hundred feet above the surrounding country. But these insignificant hills form the only elevated ground that breaks the immense plain that stretches from the Carpathian to the Ural range. They are important also as containing the sources of the great rivers that drain to the Baltic, the Black Sea, and the Caspian; and not far off is the low water-shed from which the Northern Dwina flows towards the White Sea and the Arctic Ocean.

The Valdai Hills, therefore, though they be little beside the mountain systems of Western Europe, play an important rôle. They form the *umbilicus* of Russia—its geographical centre, and the nucleus round which the early traditions and history of the Russian race are grouped. From its south-eastern skirts issues the Volga, flowing through the region where the Muscovite

Czarate first gathered strength. To the south rises the Dnieper, that runs under the historic old walls of Kiev,—a splendid seat of wealth and power when the site of Moscow was still a forest. Towards the west we come upon the head-waters of the Niemen, and to Lithuanian Russia, whose princes gave the law in Eastern Europe while the ancestors of the present Autocrat were bending humbly under the yoke of the Tartars. Standing on the bold bluffs of granite and quartz that on the north dominate the basin of Lake Ilmen, you look down upon a region perhaps still more full of ancient associations and historic interest. The eye takes in a wide view of forest, lake, and morass; of cultivated land, wooded knolls, and waste patches of sand, where, scattered far apart, the belfries of village churches, with the sun gilding their metal domes, peep out from among the pine trees or dot the banks of slow-flowing streams.

This is the province of Novgorod, the cradle of the Russian nationality. Even now the country seems only in course of being slowly reclaimed from a state of nature. But a thousand years ago the scene must have been rude indeed. This plain was then the most northerly and easterly outpost of the great Slav race. Here they dwelt surrounded on almost all sides by savage Finnish peoples—Tchuds, Vesses, and Merians; by still more ferocious Lithuanic tribes; exposed to incursions from the Scandinavian pirates, and divided among themselves by fierce feuds. They were scarcely less rude and barbarous than their neighbours. Like them they were heathens, worshipping Perun, the god of thunder; offering human sacrifices to the deities of the earth and air, and to the genii of the forests and swamps; and celebrating

the obsequies of their chief by burning his wives and slaves on the funeral pyre. They lived, the old chroniclers say, "like wild beasts;" but already they had begun to show their passion for agriculture, and their talent for colonizing and encroaching, and for absorbing weaker peoples. Slowly they were pushing forward, like a wedge, into the heart of the country, clearing spaces in the primeval woods in which to plant their scanty crops of grain and build their rude fortified villages. Already, favoured by their position on the head-waters of the navigable streams, they had begun to engage in commerce.

Ten centuries ago, perhaps, might have been seen from the most northern spurs of the Valdai Hills the wooden buildings of Novgorod—the "New Town"—situated on both sides of the Volkhov, after it issues from Lake Ilmen, to find its way to Lake Ladoga, and finally to the Gulf of Finland by the broad Neva; for already Novgorod was the metropolis of the nascent Russian state.

We begin then our survey of the Russian dominions, not at the east or the west, the north or the south, neither at the centre nor the extremities, but at the beginning. Every Russian at least knows that Novgorod Veliki—"Novgorod the Great"—is the birth-place and name-place of the nation. It is only some one hundred miles to the south-east of St. Petersburg; but the supercilious modern capital on the Neva has disdained to open a direct communication with the decayed old Slav metropolis on the Volkhov.

For, alas! it has sadly fallen from its former opulence and splendour; and the command of its trade is no longer a prize that is worth straining to catch.

Only the relics remain of the great city of half a million souls ; the head-quarters of Ruric and the "men of Rus;" the heart of the great republic which was the wonder of medieval Europe. Railways, among other modern appliances of trade, have been largely introduced into Russia of late years ; but Novgorod has benefited little by them. The main route from St. Petersburg to Moscow does not make the small deviation necessary to embrace Novgorod in its course. It was the imperial will and pleasure of the late Czar Nicolas that this main railway, regarding the route of which engineers, contractors, and military men were engaged in endless squabbling, should be drawn as straight as a ruled line ; and Novgorod has had to be content with connecting herself with it by a small branch line. Such things can be done in Russia !

A longer but perhaps more interesting journey is that by which the traveller, leaving the railway fifty miles from St. Petersburg, proceeds in a small steamboat up the Volkhov, arriving probably late in the evening at the ancient town. The scenery through which he passes produces a feeling of novelty and strangeness, if he is making a first acquaintance with Russia ; but when the newness wears off, a still stronger sense of monotony begins to assert itself. It is not a land that charms you by its soft graces of outline and pleasing diversity of colour. You perceive somehow that you have left the familiar scenes of Europe, and yet are not in Asia.

The country is flat and featureless in contour, like a Tartar physiognomy, and yet preserves a Tartar harshness of expression. Nature seems to have intended it for a solitude ; but the hard needs of man have compelled

him to invade her sanctuary, and win his hard black bread with sweat and care.

Long as this portion of the empire has been occupied, it preserves the primitive air of an American settlement in the backwoods. This is partly due, no doubt, to the wooden materials of which the houses are built. Quarries of stone are few in that flat land, and the peasant throughout Russia builds his cabin of logs, employing brick where wood cannot be used. There is no permanence about these dwellings. The popular saying runs that "Russia is burned once every seven years." The strong ties of association that bind us in Western Europe to the home of childhood, fastening our affections, as it were, to very walls and stones, have not time to grow up there.

The *moujik*—the Russian peasant—feels himself more in the position of one who has set up his tent, than as having built a permanent shelter for himself and his children's children. From the earliest times, and in a certain sense still, he has held himself ready to abandon his patrimony, and shift farther into the wilderness: the passion for wandering has got into his blood. Whole populations, influenced by the oppression of their rulers, the dread of Tartar invasion, or golden reports of fertile and vacant lands ahead, were in the habit of leaving the older settled localities in a body and moving elsewhere. The wealth of the great proprietors depended less on the extent of their lands—of which there was never any lack—than on the number of hands there were to till them. Governments also could not afford to lose the main source of their revenue, the industrious peasantry, on whom their capitation tax and other

heavy state burdens mainly rested. Stern "ukases" were issued to stop the displacement of population; the tenants and dependants of the boyards, or great nobles, became bondsmen "attached to the glebe," bought and sold with the land, like the other chattels upon it; and the village communities had their rights to the grounds which they tilled in common legally recognized,—these rights, however, being then, and in some places still, regarded by the peasants and their masters as an onerous duty rather than as a valuable possession. In a word, serfage and the commune were established; and the Russian peasant of to-day is largely the product of these two remarkable institutions, the nature and the influence of which, however, form too wide and intricate a subject to be entered into here.

In the Novgorodian landscape, therefore, the tourist must not look for picturesqueness or fertility—at least in the northern and eastern parts of the province. In its best days it never was famous for its agricultural riches. Only a small part of it has ever been brought, or is likely to be brought, under the plough. With an area equal to that of England, the population of the government of Novgorod is little over a million. Much of it is still covered with the primeval pine woods, and alternating with these forest tracts are great undrained marshes and wide spaces of sandy plain. The desolate aspect of the scene is increased by the absence of the scattered farmsteads we associate with country life at home. A sociable and gregarious people, the blank solitude and oppressive silence of the great plains and dark forests appal and depress the Russian peasant farmers; and they love to draw their houses cozily together into some snug

hamlet or township for mutual protection and companionship.

The old pagan myths have still a strong hold on the minds of the simple peasantry, in spite of nearly a thousand years of Christianity; and in few places is more implicit faith placed in these venerable superstitions than in Novgorod. After nightfall a thousand unearthly and malign creatures are abroad. The were-wolf haunts the forest, and the foul vampire creeps from the sepulchre to slake his thirst for sweet young blood. Tales are whispered over the fire about the clumsy antics of the *domovoi*—the “brownie,” or familiar house-spirit—who takes up his quarters in empty barns and mills; of weird encounters with the *roussalka*, or wood-fairy; with the *leechie*, or forest-demon, who slinks sidelong through the undergrowth, dogging the steps of the traveller; and with the still more malignant *vodianoi*—the water-wraith, or kelpie—who delights in enticing the unwary to his home beneath the surface of the deep pool. There are well-defined traces of the heathen worship of the old Slavs in the village customs of to-day. Perun, the Russian Thor, has still homage paid to him in various ways; the aid of Mikonla, the ploughman, the personification, as has been suggested, of the intense love of the race for agriculture, is implored as often as that of the Christian saints; and the attributes of Did-Lado, the female deity who sends the refreshing rains of early summer, are inextricably mixed up with those of the Virgin Mary. On certain anniversaries the ancient tumuli—graves of the heroes of the Novgorodian cycle—and the ruins of the towns that in other days were wealthy and industrious seats of commerce, are visited by the

country people, and observances take place that are half a superstitious rite and half a touching commemoration of a mighty past which no native of "the great" Novgorod ever forgets.

The vestiges of the departed greatness of the old republic become more noticeable as, ascending the Volkhov, we approach the renowned city of Novgorod. Once, as has been said, it contained within its walls a population of 400,000, or, as some chroniclers say, 600,000. Now, it is a dwindling and forsaken little provincial town of some 17,000 inhabitants. The cincture of its old fortifications can still be traced, and bears witness to the immense strength of the walls and the enormous extent of the city, which in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries had its seventy "quarters," in which were congregated merchants from every part of Europe and Asia. Glancing round the sweep of the ancient walls, the Novgorod of to-day looks like a shrunken nut in its shell. Nothing remains of its old magnificence except the kremlin or citadel—a feature found in every Russian town of note—and the Cathedral of St. Sophia, with a few other ecclesiastical edifices. As of yore, the Volkhov divides the town into two parts. The "side of commerce," we have the assurance of Mr. Mackenzie Wallace, who spent a considerable time in Novgorod and its vicinity, is "eminently unpicturesque and thoroughly uninteresting"—wide, ill-paved, dirty streets running at right angles to each other, and lined with houses that, as is too often the case in Russia, have no pretension to regularity or architectural effect.

Crossing to the right bank by the bridge which has often played an important part in Novgorodian history,



you find several things worthy of attention, especially by one acquainted with the city's past. The kremlin faces you, surrounded by its high battlemented wall of brick, above which rise the spiry summits of the citadel itself, consisting of bulging cupolas, surmounted by slender pinnacles in the usual Russian taste. The cathedral church is a quaint-looking building, erected more than eight hundred years ago, when architecture was in its infancy in these Northern regions. Its blind walls and massive structure bear evident token that the thrifty citizens looked forward in building it to the time when the sanctuary would be used as a magazine of war materials, and a strong place of defence in the day of civic broil or foreign attack. In spite of the secular uses to which it has been put, the ancient church is deservedly looked upon with unusual reverence; for does it not contain, in addition to miracle-working images and relics, the bones of St. Vladimir, the first Russian prince who favoured Christianity, and of Mstislaf the Brave of Smolensk, who, with his son Mstislaf the Bold, were the great defenders of the city against Lithuanian, Tartar, and Muscovite aggression? On the walls are curious old frescoes of the twelfth century; and on the canopy overhead is painted a gigantic figure of Christ, with the arms outstretched in the act of blessing the city, which is popularly believed to show signs of rejoicing or of grief at every great change in the fortunes of Novgorod.

Close by the old cathedral is a wide-open public place, and in the middle of this stands the monument erected in 1862 in commemoration of the "millennium" of the Russian nationality, an event much more grandly celebrated by the serf emancipation of the year previous.

The monument is described as a colossal pedestal of stone, surmounted by an enormous globe, round which are grouped figures emblematical of Russian history. On this spot, more than a thousand years ago, the Varangian Ruric and his "men of Rus" set up their standard, and took possession of the town. According to the old chroniclers, whose story is generally accepted as based on historic fact, these "men of Rus" were Scandinavianrovers—from Roslagen, in Sweden, it is thought—of that race of Vikings who then infested all European seas, conquering and founding states in England, Normandy, the Low Countries, and Sicily, and pillaging even the shores of Greece and the islands of the Ægean.

These bold and enterprising Norsemen, who dared the perils of the Greenland seas in search of spoil and adventure, and are believed by some to have actually visited America five hundred years before Columbus, were scarcely likely to overlook the growing Slav power on the Volkhov. At that period the Slavs, the last of the Aryan races to arrive in Europe, were partly settled, as they are to-day, as far to the south-west as the Adriatic; but Novgorod, as we have said, was their farthest limit to the north-east. There, tired of the constant wars with Finns and Livs, and anxious to devote themselves to trade and agriculture, they called in Ruric, with his Norse followers, to be their head and protector. He found the town defended by its earthen wall, surmounted by a wattled palisade, the highest development of Slav fortification at the time; and he built on the site of the present kremlin a feudal stronghold that could bid defiance to the savages. Ruric is the ancestor of most of the princely personages that

figure in subsequent Russian history, and his *droujina*—his retainers or henchmen, men that to the early Slavs appeared “tall as pine trees and fierce as bears”—were the founders of the great families of boyards who for so many centuries have had things nearly all their own way in Russia.

If Ruric proved himself a King Stork to his subjects, they had much to thank him for; and by-and-by, when his descendants moved to fairer and more fertile regions in the south, the citizens were left very much to their own devices. For, as has been hinted, the importance of Novgorod depends not on its agricultural riches,—in that respect it is poor,—but on its commanding geographical position. Holding the key of the Valdai Hills, it had water communication with rivers draining to the Baltic, the White Sea, the Caspian, and the Euxine. By the Volkhov the Novgorodians descended to Lake Ladoga and the Gulf of Finland; and by the same route they could also make their way with little difficulty to the shores of the Arctic Sea. They descended the great river Volga, which in all times has been the commercial highway of Russia, and were the carriers of merchandise between Europe and the distant East. Their neighbourhood to the sources of the Niemen and Dwina and of the Dnieper brought them into communication on the one hand with the Germans, and on the other with the Greeks of the Eastern Empire.

Every year Novgorod grew in wealth and population, till in the fourth and fifth centuries after its occupation by Ruric it had reached the apex of its glory. Christianity had been introduced by Vladimir the Saint, great-grandson of Ruric, and the pagan observances had been

abolished, and the old beliefs expelled or transmuted into new superstitions.

A turbulent and a pious city was the Novgorod of those days. Its civil and its religious freedom went hand in hand. The citizens chose as the head of the republic some prince of the House of Ruric from a neighbouring state; but they did not allow him to govern, and they exacted an oath from him that he would conserve all the rights and privileges granted them by their great benefactor Jaroslav, son of Vladimir, the Charlemagne of Russia, who built the church of St. Sophia. The prince led their armies in the numerous wars against the Finns, Lithuanians, and Poles, or with the neighbouring republic of Pskov. Very often they turned their weapons against himself, and ejected him with little ceremony when he did not please them. The Metropolitans of Novgorod would acknowledge no ecclesiastic dependence on Kiev or on Moscow. Had not the Church of St. Sophia also its wonder-working images and its sainted bones? Were they not Novgorodians, who would not doff their caps to any Muscovite or Little Russian? Everything was done by popular vote, and by the convocation of the notables, under their *possadnik* or burgomaster, gathered either in the cathedral or in the Court of Jaroslav beyond the river. When this assembly was sitting, or when public strife and clamour were raging, the great bell was rung. Sometimes it pealed forth for seven days without ceasing. It was the sonorous voice of the republic, whom the citizens proudly termed "My lord Novgorod the Great." "Who," they said, "can resist God and great Novgorod?"

Under these free institutions its commercial importance developed in a wonderful manner. Novgorod became, in the words of the writers of the time, "a prodigiously large city." Its territory was more extensive than that of the Venetian Republic. Its "Good Companions," as the bands of adventurers called themselves, sailed down the Volkhov in their light craft, and made their way by lake, marsh, and stream to the White Sea and the base of the Ural Mountains. They reduced to submission the vast territories comprehended in the modern governments of Archangel, Vologda, and Olonetz; founded a new republic in Viatka, between the Volga and the Kama; and penetrated far into Siberia. When they came near to a town, they did not stop to inquire whether its inhabitants were Christian or pagan, but made war upon it as a matter of course. Deeply religious men they were, too, after their own notions. They prayed fervently before attacking a sleeping village, and set up a cross on the blood-stained ashes. Little better than pirates, perhaps, were these pious swash-bucklers, though in that respect they differed not from all the pioneers of their time. But they were bold, fearless, enterprising men, who laid wide and deep the foundations of the Russian power, and added enormously to the wealth and consequence of Novgorod.

The wealth of the great republic was the cause of its downfall. It excited the cupidity of the Poles and Lithuanians. But more dangerous than all was the growing power of the principality of Moscow. Time after time it repelled the Grand Princes; but possessing as they did the rich grain-lands of the Volga, they had the power of starving it into terms. Great plagues and

famines thinned the population; and then, in 1478, Ivan the Great, the "Binder of the Russian Land," marched against it while it was torn by internal factions, ravaged and wasted the region round about with his Tartar cavalry, took the city, massacred or deported its principal inhabitants, and added its great possessions to his own. That was an important day for Muscovy, for it brought its frontier for the first time to the sea—though it was only the White Sea. But it was the day of Novgorod's humiliation. It was stripped of its power and its independence; its defences were destroyed, and its subject towns shared in its fall. Isborsk alone—founded by a brother of Ruric—retained its kremlin.

But if possible a worse enemy to Novgorod than Ivan the Third was his grandson, the "terrible" Czar Ivan the Fourth. Determined to put an end finally to the ceaseless rebellions of its people, he occupied the city, and for six weeks devoted himself to the slaughter of its citizens. Every day, it is said, during that period upwards of a thousand people, without regard to age or sex, were slain or flung over the parapet of the bridge into the Volkhov, while boat-loads of soldiers lay in wait below to prevent any of the victims from reaching the shore. There is a curious ripple under the piers of the bridge, where the water never freezes in winter, which the awe-struck native will point out to you as caused by the troubled spirits of the martyred Novgorodian patriots. Besides the sixty thousand that perished in this manner, tens of thousands of families were transplanted to the interior of Russia. Ivan sought to get rid of others by planting colonies of citizens of Novgorod on Novaya Zemlia—the desolate "new land," in the Arctic Sea,

which had just been discovered—where, of course, they all perished miserably. The old privileges of the city were taken away. It fell afterwards into the hands of the Poles and the Swedes; but it never recovered from the terrible treatment the two Ivans meted out to it. The neighbourhood of St. Petersburg has shorn it of some of the few attractions that a Russian country town affords, and it is now the dreariest of provincial capitals.

Its crops of rye, buckwheat, and hemp, above all, its forests, now furnish the chief wealth of the province of Novgorod. The great lakes Ilmen and Bielo are well stored with fish; and in the numerous ponds and lakelets of the Valdai district, acclimatized salmon, and the still more aristocratic sterlet, are reared, and the fishermen make a comfortable living by conveying these to the St. Petersburg and Moscow markets. In the recesses of these hills are many charming glens and wooded nooks, where we come upon the quaint villages of the natives of these parts—a race by themselves, famed for the good looks of their women, their curious custom of painting the neck and hands blue, red, and black, and for their manufacture of savoury cracknels and great bells; and the scenery has a diversity of aspect rarely seen in Novgorod, or, for that matter, in Russia.

Neighbours of Novgorod, and lying respectively west, east, and south of the Valdai Hills, are three provinces—Pskov, Tver, and Smolensk—that illustrate the progressive stages of the history of Russia, and varying phases of the national life. In the economic condition of Pskov and Tver may be traced the fickle ebb and flow of the currents of trade in the course of centuries.

The city of Pskov is a thousand years old, and boasts of being the birth-place of the Princess Olga, daughter-in-law of Ruric, and the first Christian convert in the ruling family of Russia. It was once the head of a republic, and the commercial rival of Great Novgorod. It, too, had its massive kremlin, its cathedral—not to mention one hundred and fifty smaller churches—its important wars, and its alliances with Lithuanians and Poles, and with the Grand Princes of Kiev and Moscow. Pskov called herself the "younger sister" of Novgorod; and the two republics quarrelled with each other in a way that was anything but sisterly. The Pskovians also spoke of their city as "the Great," and prefixed to it the style of *Gospodin*—"my lord." The period of its decay, as of its greatness, was contemporary with the decline and fall of Novgorod; and the causes also were identical.

Pskov has, however, sunk to an estate lower, if possible, even than her ancient rival. The modern town has some twelve thousand odd inhabitants. It is a squalid and desolate-looking place, with narrow miry streets lined with rickety wooden houses. The line of railway from St. Petersburg to Warsaw passes it at some little distance, having disdained to move a few miles aside to touch the old emporium. It has a certain consequence as the seat of a provincial government, and it preserves a few vestiges of its leather and furniture industries. The annual fair, the "Great Town" and the "Middle Town" quarters still remain; and its churches, sixty in number, are more than sufficient for the needs of the people. The old ramparts, that often repelled the Teutonic Knights, are crumbling away: "the street boys,"



says M. Rambaud, "amuse themselves by flinging the stones into the Pskova to frighten the laundresses." But on fête days, when the great bell booms from the Cathedral of the Trinity, where rest the bones of the best-beloved princes of Pskov—Vsevolod, Gabriel, and Dovmont the Lithuanian—and is answered in less deep notes from the belfries of its numerous churches, a phantom of its past splendour seems still to linger above the decayed old town. A more abiding lustre, perhaps, attaches to Pskov in that it has given to Russia the greatest of her poets—Alexander Pushkin.

The district of Pskov is even poorer than Novgorod in agricultural resources, and the people are more primitive in their ways. With an area nearly as large as that of the kingdom of the Netherlands, its population only numbers three quarters of a million. The soil is flat and sandy, and much of the surface is covered with swamp and forest. At Pskov the Pskova river joins the Velikaia, and a little farther down the united stream falls into Lake Pskov, which again is a prolongation of the great Lake Peipus, whose flat shores of sedge and sand, two hundred miles in circuit, are, however, chiefly within the neighbouring governments of Livonia and St. Petersburg. A busy current of commerce sweeps round its skirts, but Pskov itself is in a backwater, where few influences from the outer world penetrate. The ancient Slav customs and family organization are found here in pristine simplicity. The costume of the women has changed little since the days of Olga. The maidens still bind a broad ribbon across their heads, that after marriage is replaced by a linen band, and wear round their necks a kerchief brodered with glass beads, which

is removed at the altar. The wide-sleeved sarafan, or gown, fastened behind from top to bottom with metal bangles, the mitten of sheepskin edged with sable, and the strong shoes lined with wool, are articles of dress that have altered little in fashion for many centuries.

The housewife, respected and consulted as the manager and director of in-door affairs throughout Russia, is regarded in Pskov, perhaps more than elsewhere, as the absolute power at the family hearth, to whose behests daughters-in-law and children, and even sons and husband, must pay implicit attention within her own especial domain. The food of this primitive folk, as may be imagined, includes few foreign delicacies. Black rye bread—the “staff of life” throughout Russia—cabbage soup, curdled milk and potatoes, occasionally oat-cakes, cheese, butter, and eggs, these meet all their simple wants, if we add draughts of *kavuss* (beer made from the aforesaid black bread), or stronger potions, if procurable, of *vodka* (rye spirit). Ordinarily, however, the Russian peasant is a frugal and contented fellow, with whom a little luxury—a spoonful of gravy to enrich his daily mess, or a glass of home-brewed beer to wash it down—goes a long way. Even when in liquor he is seldom or never quarrelsome, but rather, perhaps, inclined to be demonstratively affectionate. The peasantry of Novgorod and Pskov, in spite of their simple fare, have long been noted for their well-grown, sturdily-knit figures, and many of the female population have regular features and pleasing expressions. They have a staidness and dignity of deportment, amounting almost to austerity, that contrasts strongly with the light, volatile, and impulsive demeanour of the Polish and Little Russian

people to the south, and which may, in part at least, be attributed to their still unextinguished pride in their ancient republican independence and power.

Unlike Novgorod and Pskov, Tver is on one of the main arteries of Russian trade. The chief town of the old principality is a considerable and a rising place. Czar Nicolas's "straight line" of rail happened to hit it, and helped to build its fortunes. It has still only some thirty thousand inhabitants, but it is an entrepôt for the grain from the fertile corn-lands of the south on its way to the capital. It has its theatre, its public parks and drives, its busy working population, its lively provincial society, and even its small literary coterie. Of course it has its kremlin and its cathedral, in which are the bones of the sainted Prince Michael, basely murdered in 1319 at the court of the Tartar Khan of Kazan, by George Danielovitch of Moscow, with whose family the princes of Tver disputed for a century subsequently the possession of the grand principality and the precedence among Russian states. Like other Russian towns, Tver has often suffered by fire, and has profited by the disaster. To a terrible conflagration in 1763, that burned the city to the ground, it owes its present regularity of design and its broad and straight thoroughfares.

Few parts of the empire present such a scene of animation and active industry as the government of Tver. The nobles have the reputation of being among the most advanced and liberal of the Russian aristocracy in their ideas and in their treatment of their tenantry and dependants. The result of this is seen in the superior industry, robustness, and contentment of the Tverian

peasantry. The winter time is the period when business and labour are at their briskest. Tver owes its importance to its position on the sources of the Volga, and the products of the immense region of which that river is the commercial artery are here drawn to a focus. Vast stores of grain—wheat, rye, oats, barley, and pease—and of wool, hemp, flax, and other raw material, are constantly arriving for storage or for transport to the manufacturing countries to the west. Tver itself is not noted for its agricultural riches. It has the same rigorous climate and poor soil as Novgorod and Pskov; like them, it is within the “zone of forest.” Its timber is, indeed, one of its great sources of riches. Thousands of its population are engaged in the work of wood-cutting, rafting, and saw-milling. The felled trunks of oak and larch are dragged over the snow to the banks of the rivers, whence, as soon as the ice melts, they are floated down-stream to spots where thousands of saws are busy cutting up the rough logs into beams, battens, and deals for shipment to Western Europe. Altogether, a more active and yet more peaceful scene, one more indicative of vigorous life in the present and of promise for the future, can hardly be witnessed within the Czar’s possessions than that to be seen within his faithful province of Tver.

Travelling southwards, and leaving the Valdai Hills behind us, we enter a district famous for the great events that have happened within it in modern as well as in medieval times—Smolensk. The Varangians followed this route on their way from the Volkhov to the Lower Dnieper; but they saw little in these cold, swampy,

forest-clad flats to tempt them to linger when the sunny, smiling plains of the Ukraine lay before them. As soon, however, as the early Russian State began to break up into principalities, Smolensk began to assert its importance. It contains the upper waters of the Dnieper and the heads of the valleys of the Dwina and the Moskva—streams draining into three seas.

The commercial advantages of this position have in all times been overshadowed by its military importance. It was the debatable land between Novgorod and Kiev, and later between Moscow and Lithuania. On this field have been fought out the great contests between Poland and Russia—between Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy—in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; and it was a scene of the prolonged struggle between Czar Peter and the Alexander of the North—Charles the Twelfth of Sweden. Through it lies the direct road to Moscow and the heart of Russia. On its soil were fought, in that “memorable year,” 1812, some of the most murderous battles that marked Napoleon’s advance on the capital; and its snow-covered ways and obscure hamlets witnessed the hideous scenes of suffering and vengeance enacted during the retreat of that terrible winter. The sites of a thousand desperate fights, still famous or sunk in oblivion, are thickly sprinkled over the surface of Smolensk; and the mouldering bones of combatants of a score of different races—Turk, Tartar, and Finn, Lithuanian, Pole, and Russ, German, Swede, and Frenchman—fatten its lean soil. It is, in fact, the battle-field of Russia, the scene above all others where she has won her unity and independence from foreign control; and the Russians are not oblivious to the fact,

as the memorial on the scene of the sanguinary struggle at Borodino—which, however, is just outside of the boundary of Smolensk—serves, among many other proofs, to show. They complain that "space is their great enemy;" but here they must admit that it proved their saviour, when their courage, their numbers, their military skill, and the lavish expenditure of their blood, availed them not.

The old city of Smolensk, the capital of the government, has associations that are in fit keeping with the warlike history of the province. It is built on the banks of the Dnieper, and is admirably situated for trade; but its prosperity has been too often staked on the chances of a battle for it to have had an unbroken career of good fortune. Its kremlin, washed by the waters of the river, often destroyed and rebuilt, is still the most prominent building in the town. The remains of the massive walls, thirty feet high, fifteen feet thick, and two miles in circuit, which were long believed to render Smolensk impregnable, still exist. In the days of the Mstislafs—the "Brave" and the "Bold"—the principality on the Upper Dnieper protected Novgorod, and spread its conquests as far as Halitch (modern Galicia), of which the younger Mstislaf died the ruler. But the growing power of Moscow in the east absorbed Smolensk as it absorbed Novgorod. It was an appanage of the Grand Dukes of Lithuania when, in 1514, Vassili, son of Ivan the Great and father of Ivan the Terrible, besieged it, battered down the "impregnable" ramparts of the kremlin with his great guns, and entered the city amid the rejoicing of the people, who were tired of Polish supremacy. Ever since, Smolensk has been one of the most patriotic

of Russian cities. A hundred years later, in the "time of the troubles," when the old male line of Ruric had been exhausted, and before the present family of the Romanoffs were seated in their place, Smolensk was again taken by the Poles after a long and bloody resistance; but it was won back by the Czar Alexis, son of Michael Romanoff, in 1654.

Its last and most terrible experience was in 1812, when the "grand army" of nearly half a million of men, led by the greatest military genius of modern times, burst over the frontiers of Russia and pursued its conquering way towards Moscow. It was in attempting to cover Smolensk that the Russian army under Barclay de Tolly and Bragation was beaten and driven back in the sanguinary battles of the 14th, 17th, and 19th of August. Other three days sufficed to carry the town, though garrison and inhabitants fought with the fury of patriotic and religious zeal, and the battered walls of the kremlin and the blazing streets were drenched with the blood of twenty thousand dead. Great were the rejoicings of the conquerors, while the city was abandoned to pillage, and marauding parties wasted the country around, more especially after the patriot host, making its final stand near the Moskva, at Borodino, was again repulsed with fearful carnage, thirty thousand Frenchmen and forty thousand Russians being piled in heaps on the field of battle.

It was a ruinous triumph, as was seen three months later. When the remnants of the victorious army, fleeing from the smouldering ruins of Moscow, pursued not only by the avenging Russians, but by still more remorseless enemies—cold and hunger—re-entered the deserted streets

of Smolensk, they found there no comfort, no supplies, no resting-place from persecution, scarcely even shelter for the thousands of sick and wounded. Footsore and famishing they had to continue their weary way through a country which their own hands had utterly wasted, turning at bay at intervals to repel the attacks of the relentless foe; massacred by the infuriated peasantry when any of them straggled behind; numbed to the bones by the Arctic cold, and seeing no speck in the white expanse of the snow-covered plain except the ravens that flapped slowly in their rear, and no hope of escape but in the grave. It was here, in a word, where was enacted one of the greatest tragedies of modern times—where a mass of living valour and military strength such as has seldom been brought together was utterly wrecked and dissipated in space, and a mighty reputation received a fatal wound. Is it strange that stories of this eventful time cling to every by-way and thicket in the environs of Smolensk, and along the broad track followed by the retreating French army; that they are told over, with marvellous additions, by the village firesides; and that the deeds of the patriot troops, of the Cossack horsemen, and of the peasant volunteers, should be mixed up with the exploits of the earlier heroes of the race?

Smolensk is not only the most celebrated; but—with the exception of Viazma, one hundred miles to the eastward, where also a battle was fought between the Russians and the French—the only important town of a government which contains over a million of souls spread over twenty-one thousand square miles of territory. The new city, partly built of stone, which has risen, on



the ashes of the old wooden one, contains some handsome public buildings, including the large allowance of churches which we find in every Russian town.

Besides a cathedral, with the archbishop's palace, there are Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches for the unorthodox Christians; and monasteries, colleges, a military school for the nobles, assembly rooms, and other institutions required by an advanced civilization. It retains the control of a large transport business in grain on its way to the Baltic ports; and also a considerable manufacturing trade in carpets, linen goods, soap, and leather. Altogether, Smolensk, with its twenty-five thousand inhabitants, is a place of some little activity and enterprise; and if it has not the stir and bustle of Tver, it has still less resemblance to the forsaken and decaying streets of Novgorod and Pskov. But for generations to come the chief interest which the city and the government must present to the tourist will be the traces they contain of the ruinous tempests of war that have so often swept over them in the past.

## CHAPTER III.

### LITTLE RUSSIA AND KIEV.



WHEN the extreme southern frontier of Smolensk is crossed, we are in Little Russia. The "zone of forests" is left behind ; the fat grain-lands of Tchernigov and the Dnieper valley are around us, and the green rolling prairies of the Ukraine in front. The transformation from the lowering gloom of Smolensk to the "favoured land" of Little Russia is like the change from the dark and dolorous scene that closes the dramatic part of a pantomime to the gay frolic and brilliancy of the harlequinade. There is a change in latitude, in elevation, and in soil. We seem transported from the climate of Sweden to that of Southern France.

From a region where the frost binds up the marshes and the snow keeps its chill hand on the ground until far into April, a day or two's march has brought the traveller to a land where the cottages are buried under the blossom of peach and apricot trees, where the grape ripens in the open air, and where tobacco is grown for export. The heavy drapery of the forest has disappeared—not suddenly, but by degrees. Oak, ash, and lime trees mingle with the dark evergreen of

the fir and spruce ; the woods become thinner and more scattered, and the last sentinels of the great " Northern Host " of pines are left behind. There are heavily timbered patches in Tchernigov, and in the northern parts of Kiev there are still fine tracts of woodland, but farther south are the boundless, treeless steppe-lands.

In great level spaces, or in gentle undulations, like a sea rocking itself to rest after a tempest, the country stretches away until sky and horizon meet in a hardly discernible line. In spring and summer it is an ocean of verdure, the vivid green starred by flowers of every hue, and scattered over with large herds of sheep and cattle ; in autumn, a bare brown waste of burned-up pastures ; and in winter, a white, unsullied expanse of snow. Human habitations do not make a great figure in the landscapes of the Ukraine. The Cossack plants his *hata* under the lee of some swell in the surface, or by the margin of a stream where his flocks can be watered during the parching droughts of the summer. A group of oak or walnut trees, guarded with extreme care, helps to shelter his snug little home, with the garden, cattle enclosures, and other outhouses grouped around it ; and the biting blasts of the north and the hot breath of the desert pass over his humble roof without disturbing his tranquillity of mind. The wide rim of his horizon is the boundary of his world, and in spite of many drawbacks he finds it not an unpleasant place to dwell in.

For Little Russia is inhabited by a people who are the true children of its sunny skies, rich soil, and open, breezy plains. They speak a dialect that differs considerably from that of the Great Russia to the north and north-east of them. They dwell in a land that yields its

fruits not grudgingly and sparingly, but with lavish hand, and almost spontaneously. They are not less fond of agricultural work than their neighbours, but they have more opportunity for play. They are Slavs of the Slavs. The buoyancy of temperament—the *insouciance*—which carries the Russian through so many of the trials that fall to his hard lot, is possessed in a special degree by the peasant cultivators of Kiev and Poltava; but while elsewhere it may be set down to stolidity, here it can only be attributed to light-hearted gaiety of spirits.

Neither in intermittent devotion to labour, nor in luxurious appreciation of the delights of idleness when the working hours are over, is he a whit behind his brother peasant of the forests; but while the latter loves to revel in the close warmth of his smoky hut, the Little Russian can take his ease in the open air. His history, his descent, his religious feelings and political sympathies, like his mother tongue, are not identical with those of his Muscovite compatriot; and he is keenly alive to the fact. He draws, indeed, a broader distinction than is perhaps warranted by the facts, and “cocks his beaver” with disdain at races that can lay less claim to purity of blood and superiority of physique. He knows that the Great Russia of the northern forests and eastern wastes is but a colony of his own beautiful land; that it was from this nest on the Dnieper that the vast swarm hived off that has covered the half of Europe and the half of Asia, just as our little Britain of the seas is the original home of the race that has colonized the “Greater Britain” of America and Australia.

If Novgorod was the beginning of the political power of Russia, Kiev is the birth-place of her religion and

her literature. And the Kievian, like the Novgorodian, does not forget the days that are past. The old capital is still the capital of his country to him—much the same as the Scotsman regards Edinburgh as the capital of his native land. The ancient glory of Kiev touches his imagination more quickly perhaps than the later power of Moscow; the honour and advancement of the Slav race and tongue are often nearer to his heart than the aggrandizement of Russia. So the "Panslavic" idea—the notion of uniting all the Slavonian peoples, in Turkey and Austria as well as in Russia, in one great and irresistible confederation—has a special allurements for the Little Russian. The wild Nihilist theories also—the recoil from the hard and fast bonds of absolutism—have found a most fertile field for propagation in the old home of the Slavs. The revolutionary seed has not only been thickly sown among the students at the universities of Kiev and Kharkov, but is discoverable, it is said, even in the professorial staff.

But whatever dangerous combustibles are hidden in the Little Russian's bosom, his daily life bears little sign of their presence. The brightness of the Slav temperament has not been dimmed, as in the north, by melancholic infusions from aboriginal Finnish stocks. His affinities, so far as they are not purely Slavonic, are rather with the Greek and the Tartar. His quick, artistic impulses, his inflammable enthusiasm, have been stimulated by Hellenic impulses from the Black Sea and Byzantium, and the Tartar admixtures of centuries have helped to inspire him with an almost savage love of outside nature, of personal freedom, and of war. In the very looks and costume, and much more in the manner

of life, of the peasant of the Ukraine, are reminiscences of his long and troublous relations with Turk and Mongol nomads. There are Tartar traits in the type of his features and in his dark hair and eyes. He is one of those who "love to lie i' the sun;" and the sun has left its kiss on the brown cheek, and kindled some of its fiery fervour in his nature. From choice, he would sleep rather under the stars than within doors; and there are traces of the magic and mystery of the summer night in his wayward fancies. For the rest, we see a tall and sturdy figure, firmly knit by a life of toil and outdoor exercise from childhood up.

If to be merry is to be wise, then the shepherds of the "frontier" and the peasantry of the Black Lands of the Dnieper are among the sages of the earth. Jest, raillery, quick repartee, are as the breath of their nostrils; song, dance, and music have for them irresistible attractions. A vein of poetry, not deep perhaps, but widely spread, runs through this race. Their land is the oldest and chosen home of Russian folk-lore, where snatches of lyrical ballad and strains of improvised melody still spring spontaneously from the hearts of the peasantry. Their tastes are shown in their love for flowers, their success in bee-keeping, and their skill in the training of orchard and forest trees. The humblest little garden, where the cottar grows his pot-herbs, bears witness of an artistic eye to colour and effect. The very arrangement of the houses in the rustic hamlet tells of the exercise of individual taste, instead of the mere copying of old models or next-door neighbours. Picturesque grouping takes the place of dull and ugly uniformity of straight lines.

The interiors of the houses do not belie the outsides.

In the Ukraine, the *hata* in which a young couple are to take up their abode is "run up" almost with as much ease as the Kirghiz nomad pitches his black felt tent, and the walls are not much more substantial. All the neighbours assist, the women plastering on the clay when the men are driving the stakes and plaiting the tough withes that form the skeleton framework of the future home. Within there are manifest signs of that imitative talent in carving, painting, and decoration which is the heirloom of the Russian, and which with the dwellers by the Dnieper becomes almost an original gift. On the floor, on the sides and front of the indispensable oven—which, as elsewhere in Russia, is also the family hot bath, and often the family sleeping-place—are often artistic scrolls and tracery of flowers, foliage, and figures. High on the wall to the left of the entrance, opposite the great stove, are ranged the "household gods"—figures of Virgin and saint curiously wrought and gilded—to which the inmates pay devout attention, garnishing the family shrine with flowers in their seasons, and other little marks of reverential awe. The Little Russian, as becomes his history, is a stout champion of Orthodoxy, carrying his zeal often to the extent of dissent from the established religion, as relaxing from the strict letter of ancient dogma and form. Saint-days and other Church festivals, of which there are an enormous number in the year, do not fail to receive due observance; and the "name-day" of each member of the household is an anniversary on which piety and inclination alike call upon them to make merry with their friends. Nor are more secular feasts forgotten. Among a people so social and joyous, a very slight occasion, or no occasion what-

ever, is enough to call a company of young and old together for mutual amusement.

The Malo-Russ, as his neighbour of Moscow terms him, has been called the "spoiled child" of Russia. If that is the case, it is nature and not man who has spoiled him. Since the earliest historic times Little Russia has had harsh taskmasters and experiences of war and disaster that would have broken the spirit of a race of less elastic temper. They have worked hard and fought hard, and come through it all, a people ten million strong—or thirteen million, if we count Podolia and Volhynia, along with Tchernigov, Kiev, Poltava, and Kharkov, as forming their heritage.

Who are they, and whence came they, these south-eastern Slavs, who have ended in being south-western Russians? They were settled on these fertile lands of the Dnieper as early as, if not earlier than, their northern relatives were on the banks of the Volkhov. The towers and walls of Kiev emerge from the mists of the barbaric Middle Ages even before those of Novgorod. A Slav people were here a thousand years ago, industriously turning up the rich loam, sowing, reaping, and sending their surplus grain past the cataracts of the Dnieper, and down that river to the Black Sea, to be exchanged for articles of luxury from the Eastern Empire, as the Little Russians of to-day exchange their corn at Odessa for the manufactures of Western Europe.

As early as the days of Herodotus—four hundred years before the Christian era—the Ploughmen Scythians fed the Greek colonies from this same inexhaustible granary. Where are the Scythians now—that terrible and widely-spread people, delighting in 'war



and in agriculture, who worshipped a sword stuck into the earth, and quaffed their wine from the skulls of their enemies killed in battle? Did some annihilating catastrophe overtake them that the ghost of their name no longer stalks on the earth? Were they a Hunnish race, the ancestors of those whom Attila led westward? were they allied to the Goths, who are also first seen emerging from this region to assist in the wild work of upturning the Roman world? or were they the original Slavs, over whom these human hurricanes swept without destroying? Let ethnologists say. What we know is that a millennium ago, when Ruric and his brethren were consolidating their power over the Slavs of the Volkhov — building fortresses at Novgorod, on Lake Ladoga, and on the "White Lake" far to the north-eastward, and "exploiting" the country of Pskov and Smolensk—other tribes of the same race (the Polians and Severians), as happily situated for trade, and more fortunate in soil and climate, were settled in the pleasant and fertile lands of the Dnieper, and that their metropolis, Kiev, placed on a high site on the right bank of the river, a little way below its junction with the Desna, was already coming into notice.

Within its earthen ramparts a strange medley of men of different nations were gathered together about the time when the Saxon king Alfred reigned in England. Bulgarians from the Volga, where a powerful kingdom had been founded; Khazars, whose extensive empire, stretching along the northern shores of the Black Sea and as far as the Caspian, was renowned in those days for its opulence and civilization; Tartars from the steppes; Jews from the Crimea; and Rumanyos from

the Danube, the descendants of the legionaries of ancient Dacia, who still spoke the tongue of imperial Rome,—met on common ground at Kiev, drawn thither by the fame of its growing commerce. Fiercely-whiskered Poles and big, unkempt, skin-clad Lithuanians descended the Pripet or the Dnieper, to barter the raw produce of their marshes and plains for luxuries from the Greek colonies on the Euxine or from Byzance. Religion had not yet set a great gulf between these western members of the Sarmatian stock and their Slav hosts at Kiev; nor had it established a bond of union between the latter and the smooth-mannered, supple-tongued strangers who came all the way from the Bosphorus and the Ægean, to display in the markets of Kiev their raiment of purple and fine linen, their wondrous stuffs of silk and gold brocade, their gay horse-trappings and keen-tempered weapons. Polian and Severian, Lett and Finn, Pole and Goth were alike pagan—bowing down to idols of stock and stone, and dabbling their altars with the blood of human sacrifices. But to the gates of Kiev one day came two humble monks of Byzantium—Cyril and Methodius—bearing in their hands two memorable gifts—the Greek Orthodox religion and the Greek alphabet. That was one of the great turning-points in Russian history; an event that has perhaps influenced the national destiny and character, and especially the destiny and character of Kiev, more than any other. Thenceforth the Russia beyond the Dnieper was bound to alien Constantinople by a triple strand of religion, literature, and policy, and drifted ever into more violent antagonism to the cognate race of Poland.

But before the ninth century was out Kiev received

other guests whose visit was scarcely less fateful. A Varangian band—a freebooting party of adventurers on a raid from Novgorod—descended the Dnieper, and set up here a new Norse principality. Its leader, Askold, whose tomb is still shown at Kiev, was not of the "blood of the princes," however; and not long after came Oleg, brother and successor of Ruric, taking Smolensk on his way. It was when this rude northern barbarian saw the beauty and the fertility of these southern lands, and especially when he looked upon the commanding site and imposing towers of its chief town, that he uttered the words which the Kievians are not likely to forget—"Let Kiev be the mother of Russian cities."

The Kiev of to-day is not, like its old northern rivals Novgorod and Pskov, a melancholy wreck of a great past, though in its time it has suffered even more than they have from war and fire. It is still a stately and handsome city of sixty thousand or seventy thousand souls; and in Russia, where the tendency of the population seems to be rather to spread abroad than to gather towards centres, that is considered an immense number of inhabitants. The cradle of Orthodoxy, it is still in a sense the religious centre of the nation—the "most holy place" in Holy Russia. Beautiful for situation, and commandingly placed for trade, it has not neglected to improve its charms by means of modern art, nor to avail itself of modern science in developing its commercial prosperity.

From whatever side we approach it, the first view of Kiev, like that of many other Russian towns that are less able to bear inspection from within, is strik-

ingly picturesque and imposing. Colour, form, and magnitude, the traces of ancient splendour and of modern energy, are all present to impress the traveller that he is gazing on a spot that is not unworthy to be the bourn of the pilgrimages of a vast and widely-spread nation. The broad channel of the inconstant Dnieper flows under the walls, and from its left bank some of the finest views of the city are obtained. The turbid current, the wide beds of shingle which the stream leaves as it alters its course with each flood, the precipitous rocky wall where the Petschersk quarter and Old Kiev abut on the river, are in fine contrast with the gleaming white towers, the dark red of the brick buildings, the vivid green of the trees sprinkled along the banks or grouped in lines and masses in the streets and public places, and the dazzling sheen of the silvern and golden cupolas that everywhere rear their heads.

Let this be seen in bright summer weather, when fifty thousand pilgrims from every part of the empire are gathered in the Holy City, when a brilliant blue shines overhead, and when the conical hills that rise here and there above the mass of buildings and foliage, with their green slopes, and summits crowned with churches and monuments, seem in the dry clear atmosphere preternaturally close at hand, and it will be acknowledged that the glory of Kiev has not wholly departed.

The chief interest of the city, however, lies in its associations with the past. As we walk through the streets of the old town, situated on the high ground to the north, it is almost possible to read its former fortunes in its stones; its historic sites are as so many tide-marks that show the rise and progress of early Russia. On the

summit of the Kopirev-Konets—one of the gigantic masses of rock that tower above the river—was the Pantheon of the heathen Slavs. The altar of Perun, the great war-god, was reared on the spot now occupied by the Church of St. Basil. Under its shadow the first descendants of Ruric—Oleg, Igor, and Sviatoslav—equipped the expeditions with which they harried the shores of the Euxine and the cities of Greece, conquered the countries of the Danube, and hung their shields at the “Golden Gate” of Constantinople. Here, too, on their return, they threw down the choice of their spoils and trophies before their gods.

A small Christian community had lived here in fear and trembling since the days of the monk Cyril; and the Princess Olga, when she became a convert to the faith, hardly dared avow it to the rough boyards. But one fine day, about the year 1000, the Grand-Prince Vladimir, after a stormy life of war and debauchery, bethought him of selecting a new religion; and the choice fell on that of his grandmother Olga, whose grave is shown in the Church of the Nativity. Perun the Thunderer was thrown down from his seat of honour, flogged, dragged ignominiously at a horse's tail, and trundled down the steep bank into the Dnieper. A little way down, say the chroniclers, Perun drifted ashore, and the people were ready to worship the miracle; but Vladimir's men pushed the image out again into mid-current. At the foot of the high ground at the river-side is pointed out the Fountain of Baptism, where the imperious grand-prince hustled his family and his people into the bosom of Holy Church, and renamed them, in batches of hundreds, after the saints of the Greek calendar. The Em-

peror Nicolas erected on the spot an obelisk of stone, one hundred and fifty feet in height, in memory of the event.

Many relapses followed this wholesale conversion. It was long ere the inhabitants quite gave up their faith in the old gods, if indeed it is yet wholly departed; but as Perun floated slowly away from Kiev, so paganism drifted out of the hearts of the Russian people.

Another monument of the piety of St. Vladimir was the ancient Church of the Tithe, to the endowment of which he devoted one-tenth of his revenues. Still more splendid, however, were the memorials left by his successor, Jaroslav the Great, under whom Kiev reached the summit of its grandeur; and chief of all is the Cathedral of St. Sophia, modelled after that famous church of the same name in the city of Constantine, which for so many centuries has been used as a Moslem mosque. Its great tower rises in four stages high above the other buildings of the city; its golden cupolas blaze like suns over the massive pile. "Within," says M. Rambaud, "the mosaics of the time of Jaroslav still exist. The traveller may admire on the 'indestructible wall' the colossal image of the Mother of God, the Last Supper, the images of saints and doctors, the angel of the Annunciation of the Virgin. The frescoes which have been preserved or carefully restored are numerous, and everywhere cover the pillars, the walls, and the vaults floored with gold." These works were executed by Greek artists, whom Jaroslav had attracted in large numbers to his capital. It was he, too, that founded schools in his dominions, that instituted the first code of laws, that encouraged literature and music, and first

struck coins in Russia. It is not strange that his grave, covered by its sarcophagus of marble, should be one of the most sacred spots within the walls of Kiev.

Venerable as the old city and its relics have always been in Russian eyes, they have not escaped desecration and mutilation, even from people of the Slav race. When the grand-princes began to break up their possessions, and divide them among their younger sons, and powerful new princedoms started up all around, especially in the north-east among the forests of the Volga, Kiev became the prize for the most ambitious and enterprising. Its ruler was acknowledged to possess the seniority among the sons of Ruric, and alone took the title of "Grand." Civil wars tore the Russian commonwealth. Confusion and anarchy reigned supreme. The princes were constantly engaged in triangular and quadrangular duels with each other; sometimes uniting to crush one who threatened to become too strong, and then again mixed up in a general *mêlée*, in which towns were sacked and whole provinces wasted with fire and sword. Kiev was the centre round which they fought. Russian historians record that in the one hundred and seventy years that intervened between Jaroslav's death and the period when the whole land succumbed to the Tartars, "sixty-four principalities had an existence more or less prolonged, two hundred and ninety-three princes disputed the throne of Kiev and other domains, and there were eighty-three civil wars."

The fame of opulent Kiev was spread far over the East, and attracted the cupidity of the restless nomads. Year after year, hordes of new enemies bore down on it from the steppes. Petchenegs, Polovtsi, Khvallisses,

Uzes, Kipchaks, and Nogais followed each other in apparently endless succession, appearing without warning on the eastern horizon like clouds of arrows shot by unseen archers. Kiev was the butt at which these wild flights of Turk and Tartar horsemen were directed. The open grassy plains that led up to it were a continuation of their own deserts, and it lay directly across their path into Europe. Eighteen campaigns against the Polovtsi alone, and forty-seven invasions by that people successfully repelled, are reckoned up. These incessant attacks, if they formed the Little Russians into a war-like people, also weakened their power, and caused a continuous movement of the population into the forests of the north-east, where, if there were a sterner soil and climate, comparative tranquillity might be enjoyed.

Kiev began to decline, and Suzdal, between the Volga and the Kliasma, to rise into power. At length George Dolguruky of Suzdal entered Kiev in triumph, and it ceased from that hour to be the capital of Russia. George's son, Andrew of Suzdal, has cause to be even more bitterly remembered by Kiev. He led a host of forest-men against it, and captured it by assault, and for three days it was given up to sacrilegious plunder. The numerous monasteries and other ecclesiastical buildings, even the sacred temples founded by Vladimir and Jaroslav, were not spared, and vestments, images, relics, books, pictures, and bells were carried off to the country of the Volga.

But a more awful calamity was about to burst over Kiev and over Russia. The Tartars were at last to reap the reward of their perseverance, by means of the weakness and division of the Slavs. Unknown to all, in the



remote obscurity of Central Asia—in Mongolia, and along the chain of the Altai—Ghenghiz Khan had for forty years been labouring to weld together the Mongol tribes, until he had enrolled half a million horsemen under his banner. When the full time was come, he burst from his solitudes upon an astonished world, overwhelming kingdom after kingdom, as much by the suddenness and mystery of his appearance as by the irresistible might of his army. While in other directions he overran China, and carried his arms across Persia towards the Mediterranean, a branch of his mighty host swept round the northern end of the Caspian and came full upon Kiev. The first token of its approach was the fleeing bands of the Polovtsi, coming now, not as enemies, but as suppliants. The chivalry of Southern Russia assembled in Kiev—their northern brethren offering them no help—and went forth to meet the heathen, who were encountered on the steppes north of the Sea of Azov.

The Russian army was not merely defeated, but almost annihilated. Kiev alone had ten thousand of its citizens slain on the battle-field. But the Mongols withdrew as mysteriously as they had come. For thirteen years they were no more heard of. But at the end of that time Baty Khan was sent by his uncle, Oktai, son of the great Ghenghiz, to reduce the nations of Europe, and complete the “conquest of the world.” The whole of Russia—the north as well as the south—was this time attacked, and all fell under the Tartar, who rode over its smoking ruins to Olmutz in Moravia and Liegnitz in Silesia. For three hundred years Russia was under the domination of the Tartars—an appanage of the Golden Horde of Kipchaks, whose capi-

tal was first at Sarai, near Astrakhan, in the delta of the Volga.

Kiev did not escape the general desolation, as her walls and towers to this day attest. Baty appeared before its gates in the year 1240 with a vast host of invincible barbarians. "The grinding of the wooden chariots, the bellowing of the buffaloes, the harsh cries of the camels, the neighing of the horses, and the howlings of the Tartars, made it impossible," the old historians say, "to hear your own voice in the town." The walls were battered down, and the city delivered over to sack and massacre. The last defenders of Kiev retreated to the Church of the Tithe, and fell fighting round the tomb of Jaroslav. The venerable building where Christianity was first established in Russia was burned. All that remains of it are a few fragments of its mosaic pavement, preserved in the Museum of Kiev. The other churches—four hundred they are said to have numbered in those days—were rifled and desecrated; the streets ran with blood. The very tombs were broken open. The bones of saints, martyrs, and anchorites were torn by heathen hands from their crypts in the famous catacombs, and strewn abroad.

These catacombs are in the Petschersk quarter of the city—the high ground to the south of Old Kiev, and separated from it by a deep ravine, where the principal fortifications and military and government establishments are situated. The catacombs form the most singular of all the sights of Kiev, and one of the strangest memorials of ascetic devotion to be found in any country. It is they that attract specially the thousands of pilgrims that still annually crowd to the Holy

City from the remotest corner of the empire. The Monastery of the Catacombs is said to have been founded in the ninth century. The massive gateway is ornamented with figures of its first abbots, St. Anthony and St. Theodosius. In the centre is the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin, one of the most ancient and imposing of the edifices of Kiev. The belfry rises to a height of three hundred feet, and grouped round it are glittering domes and pinnacles and huge crosses. Access is got by narrow stairs to the two ranges of catacombs cut in the soft rock forming the bank of the river, a labyrinth of subterranean passages, whose heavy atmosphere, lighted only by the dim lamps placed over the sarcophagi of the dead cenobites, seems redolent of the spirit of dark asceticism of the "pious men of old" who chose this spot as their place of living sepulture.

In this gloomy underground world, where day was not distinguishable from night, and no glad sound from the upper air ever penetrated, generations of devout monks spent their days, extended sometimes to the utmost span of human life, their thoughts busied only with their prayers and penances, and in devising new methods for mortifying the frail flesh and rendering more assured their claims to future bliss. The tomb is pointed out of the hermit John, who is said to have spent the last thirty years of his life immured in the earth up to the armpits, and who ate of food only once a week. Others went to still more sad and eccentric lengths in the dismal competition of self-torture; and some allowed themselves to be bricked up alive in the little cells where they passed their doleful days. A spot more worthy of honour is the tomb of the monk Nestor, the Father of

Russian History, whose annals, written in the twelfth century, contain almost all we know authentically regarding the early fortunes of Kiev and of the Slav race. In the centre of the catacombs are two small chapels, where the anchorites met for prayer who were not self-condemned to perpetual seclusion in their cells. These little niches are placed at intervals along the passages. Within each, in an open coffin, reposes the mummified body of its former occupant, and above is a plate bearing his name.

If homage paid to their dust could make amends for a life of pain and gloom, that certainly is not wanting; for here, especially at the Festival of the Assumption, is to be witnessed the chief outpouring of that superstitious devotion which is so marked a feature of the religious life of Russia. The pilgrims, as they pass each sacred tomb, kiss reverently the shrivelled hand laid out for the purpose, and believe that they purchase thereby a blessing for themselves and their families. Another token of the holy zeal of these votaries is the battered and defaced figure of Satan, painted on the wall of the vestibule of the catacombs, on which the rage of Orthodoxy against the author of evil is expressed in characters that may be read by all. But if the annual concourse of pilgrims adds to the importance and religious prestige of Kiev, it cannot be said to conduce to the comforts of its visitors. The streets, especially the neighbourhood of the historic sites, are thronged with beggars, sturdy or whining. Rags, wretchedness, revolting sores and deformities, are exposed to view wherever the eye is turned. The pilgrims may be pious, but they are not as a rule cleanly; they may

be fit objects for charity, but they are intolerably unfortunate.

A new humiliation was reserved for Kiev when, as the Tartar domination waned to the east, the Lithuanian power grew in the west, and it fell under a new alien and pagan rule. For centuries it bent the neck to Lithuanian and Polish masters; and not until the days of the Romanoffs, in 1667, did the "Mother of Russian Cities" again become a city of Russia. That long twilight period of foreign oppression has left no memorial worthy of the name. But in more modern times, as has been said, Kiev has been renewing its youth. It is not alone a city of historic remains, but a busy mart of trade and an enlightened seat of learning and art, full of thriving modern institutions, and containing, at least, one high triumph of science over nature—the great suspension bridge, the work of the English engineer Viniol, which spans the wide Dnieper from bank to bank.

The modern public buildings are for the most part to be found in "Podole"—the "low town"—whose handsome, well-laid-out streets, gardens, and parks occupy the space between the high ground of Petschersk and Old Kiev and the margin of the river. The University of Kiev is one of the most important in the empire, fifteen hundred students being enrolled in its classes. The library, too, is famous, though a great fire last century destroyed many of the most precious books and documents.

A popular tradition has it that one of the walled-up passages in the catacombs leads by an underground way to the ancient city of Tchernigov, the capital of the gov-

ernment of that name, situated on the Desna, eighty miles to the north-east. A more certain route, however, is available, though there is still no railway communication with Tchernigov ; and in any case a subterranean passage is not needed in order to establish a connection between it and Kiev. The two have often shared each other's good or ill fortune. Tchernigov, too, is an old town ; for Prince Oleg signed here the earliest treaty with the Greek emperors. It also had its time of dynastic trouble, when its rulers, the Olgovitches, fought the princes all round them ; and it was pillaged by Tartars and captured by Poles. But except some old ecclesiastical remains, dating as far back as the early part of the eleventh century, and fragments of the old walls, there is little in it now to detain the traveller.

Quite another interest attaches to Poltava, the chief town of the government that lies along the opposite side of the Dnieper from Kiev. Near it, in 1709, was fought that memorable battle in which Charles the Twelfth of Sweden and Czar Peter the Great brought their long duel to a climax. It was here, after nine years spent in marching from victory to victory over the face of North-Eastern Europe, and winning and losing kingdoms, and after enduring unheard-of hardships with his troops during a winter of exceptional rigour, that Charles staked his whole fortunes and reputation, the lives of his soldiers, and the safety of his native country on the issue of one desperate and decisive fight. He was far from his own Sweden, in the heart of the enemy's country ; but he had on his side the prestige of his great name, and the devotion and hitherto invincible valour of his soldiers. ' The

patriotic persistency of her people, with the peculiar natural features of the country that stood her in such good stead in the later struggle with Napoleon, availed Russia on this occasion to rid herself of a terrible foe. With their king, who had been wounded a day or two previous, carried in front of them in a litter, the Swedes swept on the Russian lines in the early morning in an irresistible charge. The Russian cavalry were scattered ; but under the voice of their Czar they re-formed, and checked the Swedish advance. The infantry coming up, pressed the enemy in turn ; while Prince Menchikof, piercing in between the Swedish army and Poltava, and annihilating their reserves on his way, cut Charles's force in two. The battle became a rout. Charles himself fled for his life, leaving his artillery, baggage, and military chest, with six thousand wounded, in the hands of the Russians, and nine thousand of the finest troops that ever followed a commander dead on the field of battle. The wreck of the army—Poles, Cossacks, and Swedes—collected beyond the Dnieper, again to dissolve, and the hero of Narva disappeared into inglorious exile with the Grand Seigneur of Turkey. Sweden, the dangerous rival of Russia for centuries, was never again a formidable enemy ; and Poltava, as Peter wrote, laid firmly the foundation-stone of the new capital on the Neva.

Poltava itself, situated on a ridge overlooking the wide steppe to the eastward, is on the site of one of the border strengths built in old times by the Cossacks of the Ukraine against their Tartar foemen. Farther on we will meet with the Cossacks under conditions where the peculiarities of their military organization and duties

can be more suitably described. But it was here, on the skirts of the frontier, in innumerable brushes with Polovtsis, Nogais, and Turks, that the association of "free-riders"—which soon came to mean something equivalent to "freebooters"—first took shape, and their manner of life marked them out so much from others that they began to be looked upon as a separate race. Many are the tales handed down from mouth to mouth, or sung with guitar accompaniment by itinerant minstrels or village bards, of the deeds of the hetmans Bolgan and Mazeppa, of the sad destiny of Paleiy, or the mournful tragedies of Kossuisky and Nalivaigko. And these ballads are not all of war; love and wine mingle with the theme. At the close of a successful foray, the Zaporogian Cossacks—the free commonwealth, who guarded the country beyond the "porogs" or cataracts of the Dnieper against all comers, and carried on a continual crusade against the Mussulmans—held festivals of Brobdingnagian proportions at the island stronghold of their hetman; for days, even weeks, the carouse was kept up, and often it ended in the brethren of the lance shedding each other's blood.

Still farther eastward we pass though the ruined fragments of the old Tartar Wall, and at some distance beyond, in the basin of the Donetz, a tributary of the Don, come to Kharkov, the capital of the steppe government of that name. Kharkov points to the future rather than to the past. Its political, ecclesiastical, and academical life are all strongly philo-Slav. Specimens of each branch of that widely-spread family of nations attend the university, founded in the beginning of



the present century. Every wild theory of social and national reconstruction takes rapid root in the impulsive Slav temperament, and blossoms into wonderful new forms. Kharkov has about it a certain "go-ahead" air. It has handsome streets and buildings, and its institutions are designed on ambitious plans. It may become a great place in the new Russia that is to be, but, like the ideas of its *doctrinaires*, it is still too chaotic and unformed, too dusty and sultry in summer and grimly cold in winter, to invite a long visit at present.

To the west of Kiev are the great provinces of Volhynia and Podolia—the Western Ukraine—fertile and flourishing border countries, where the plains begin to roll in higher and higher undulations as we approach the bases of the Carpathians. Geographically, they are part of Little Russia. The principal race inhabiting them, and the soil and climate and the manner of life, are much the same; in fact, it is thought that here the Slav blood is found freest of foreign admixture. Politically, however, they form part of Western Russia. In history, since they ceased to have a separate existence, their fortunes have generally been united with those of Lithuania and Poland. Their western parts, along with their next neighbour Galicia, formed the country of the "Red Russians;" but Galicia fell to the share of Austria in the division of the spoils of Poland, and whether it also will gravitate to the great Russian Empire, or reunite in a new Sarmatia, the future will tell. Abortive Polish insurrections have taken place in these provinces, and there were risings and massacres here in the

troublesome years of 1848 and 1863. The Polish landowners and educated classes, however, are not in full sympathy in race or religion with the Ruthenian peasantry, and the Russian and Austrian governments have taken good care not to heal the breach.

As for Volhynia and Podolia, between them they have an area nearly equal to that of England, and a population approaching four million. They are rich and pleasant countries, Podolia especially being famed for its diversified prospects and its mild climate, which have led an enthusiastic English traveller to style it the "Devonshire of Russia." These provinces raise much grain and cattle; are noted for their horses "of the Ukraine breed," herds of which were till lately, and perhaps are still, roaming the steppes in a wild state; and they do a large legitimate internal and transport trade—it may be also a little smuggling.

In the streets of Volhynian and Podolian towns like Jitomir, Vladimir, and Berditchev—the last-named of which has been dubbed the New Jerusalem, from its population of forty thousand Hebrews—the Jewish costume and features are far from unfamiliar. Banished from Great Russia, these children of Israel are extensively settled in all the southern and western governments. We will find the Lithuanian provinces farther north even more abundantly blessed with their presence than Little Russia. Wherever men do congregate to do business—and more particularly to barter—there will a certain large proportion be found with well-developed noses, long-skirted and probably greasy and looped raiment, and faces that look more cadaverous and woe-begone from their surrounding of dark ringleted locks


and peaked beards. Here, as in other parts of the world, the Hebrew people have had a history full of vicissitudes, with experiences of times both of toleration and of expulsion, of favour and of persecution. There are Jews here of many sects and degrees of sanctity—Karaites and Talmudists, Pietists and Zoharists—hating each other with an intense and concentrated fury that exceeds even their abhorrence for their Christian neighbours; and Jews gathered out of many peoples and nations—a sprinkling of the descendants of the Khazars, who are believed to have been converted to Judaism by immigrants from Palestine and Cordova, Galician Jews, Moldavian Jews, Polish Jews, and, lowest type of all, the Hebrew of Northern Hungary, who has been described as combining, in the highest possible concentration, the attributes of filth and greed. A strange, interesting, but, on the whole, not very attractive people are these children of the stock of Abraham, as we shall see when we are compelled to examine them more minutely in this northern house of bondage; and the stranger from Western Europe is certain to bear away, as one of his liveliest recollections of these countries, a picture of their cringing manners and not over clean gabardines, of the way in which talon-like hands clutched his skirts in the market-place, and hungry eyes scanned his face for prospects of barter or sale.

Many other spots of interest might be pointed out in the region of which Kiev is the centre—Kamienetz in Podolia, for instance, in other times the bulwark of Poland, and often fiercely fought for by the Turks, placed on a high peninsulated rock, round which winds the

river Smotritza on its way to the Dniester ; Kremenetz in Volhynia, the highest point of Russian soil between the Black Sea and the Baltic ; Pereiaslav, in Poltava, an old residence and place of strength of the early grand-princes of Kiev ; and Novgorod-Sieversk, in Tchernigov, the last of the princely appanages to be devoured by the all-absorbing greed of Moscow or of Poland. For new scenery, manners, and race, however, we must follow the "course of empire," and ascend the Dnieper and Pripet to their sources in Lithuanian Russia.

## CHAPTER IV.

### POLAND AND LITHUANIA.

HE Dnieper—the Borysthenes of the Greeks—deserves all the fame that it has possessed in ancient and modern times. It is a magnificent stream, with a length of over a thousand miles, a breadth in its middle course varying from a quarter of a mile to a mile and a half, and in the season of the spring floods three and four miles, and a swift and deep current. It is the great geographical feature of South-Western Russia. It has made the fortune of Kiev, and has moulded in a large measure the fate of Lithuania and Poland. Apart from its celebrated “cataracts,” which are within the boundaries of South Russia, its middle course is full of difficulties and perils for the navigator. The restless, turbulent current flings itself waywardly from one side to the other of its channel, and increases with each flood the breadth of the valley it has worn through the centre of the plains. The whitish waters hold in solution large quantities of the chalk, sand, and lime which it has ground away in chafing against its banks, or in rushing over the ledges of rock that cross its bed.

The boatmen and the raftsmen of the Dnieper need

an experienced eye and a steady hand in descending its rapids to avoid being dashed against the projecting reefs, caught in the powerful eddies, or stranded on the shifting shoals. Enormous quantities of timber are brought down the stream every season for use in the treeless steppe districts to the south, or for shipment from Kherson and Odessa. Other raw produce—hides and tallow, wax and honey, hemp and grain—with the manufactures of Western Russia, such as leather and linen goods, spirits and turpentine, are transported by water, which, as in every other part of the Russian Empire, affords the chief means of conveyance. These materials do not come from the upper regions of the Dnieper alone. Through the Desna it has canal communication with the country of the Oka and the Volga, and in other directions it is united with the Baltic rivers, the Dwina, the Niemen, and the Vistula. The difficulty in its lower course is the impetuous current that has to be contended against; but from its upper waters you can penetrate to the innermost recesses of the empire, or to any of the seas that border Russia.

A little way above Kiev the nature of the river changes. There it is no longer one great main stream, reinforced only by shallow rivulets from the thirsty steppes, but large tributaries extend like the fingers of a hand, or like the branches of a tree from the trunk. The name of the Dnieper is given to the central channel, which leads us on to Moghilev and Smolensk; but the Pripet and the Desna, its western and its eastern branches, have almost equal claim to the title, from the length of their courses and their volume. Other changes are manifest. The banks become lower and

less diversified by cliff and shelf. The woods become more frequent and dense. The gloomy drapery of the coniferous trees is again a feature in the landscape. Morasses spread for miles and miles back from the banks of the streams, and in periods of inundation are converted into vast shallow lakes. The climate has grown more rigorous and more moist. The frost bites deeper and the snow lies thicker in winter, and there are no such blossoming expanses of orchard lands to be seen in the summer as in the kindly Ukraine. We have unquestionably returned to the swamps and the forests of the north. This time, in changing the climate and the soil, we come also among a new race, with a history and traditions separate in many respects from those of the people whom we have hitherto been visiting.

The part of the Czar's dominions on which we are now entering is that which generally comes first under the notice of the traveller in Russia. His approach is made, as a rule, not through Novgorod, or by way of the Black Sea and the Dnieper, but by one of the great<sup>4</sup> lines of railway in connection with the main routes across the continent of Europe which enter Russia from the west, and are prolonged to St. Petersburg or Moscow. Before reaching the Russian people, he must pass through a country which, while it is within the political boundaries of the empire, is intensely anti-Russian in its sympathies,—through the Kingdom of Poland. In the eyes of patriotic Poles, however, Poland begins before the frontier of the "Kingdom" is touched, and it extends far beyond the limits that have been laid down as marking the border of the Russian provinces.

The Kingdom of Poland, since the last insurrection, has

itself become little more than a "geographical expression;" it is under direct control of the Government at St. Petersburg, and retains few of the privileges that were accorded to it when it was formed into a separate sovereignty and handed over by the Great Powers to the Czar by the Treaty of Vienna. Poland, in the official sense, consists of ten small provinces, with an area about equal to that of England, and a population of rather more than six millions. But the Poland that the Poles recognize is the extensive country which existed previous to the partitions—a region much more extensive than France, and now estimated to contain nearly thirty million people. Before that series of acts of international brigandage, by which it was broken up and appropriated piecemeal by its neighbours, Poland included, in addition to the "Kingdom," the province of Posen and part of West Prussia, now in possession of the Emperor of Germany; Cracow and Galicia, which have fallen to the lot of Austria; and a broad and long stretch of territory, embracing the ancient Lithuanian provinces Volhynia, Podolia, and part of Kiev, which have long ago come to be regarded by foreigners as an integral part of the dominions of the Czar. Danzig in 1772, the date of the first partition, was a sea-port of Poland on the Baltic; Kamienetz was its border stronghold towards Turkey; and its frontier extended to the north and east almost to the walls of Riga, Smolensk, and Kiev.

At a still earlier period, the Polish possessions were yet more extensive. At different times they embraced Bessarabia, Moldavia, Moravia, Silesia, and Livonia. The Ukraine, as has been mentioned, was for centuries part of Poland, whose rule was established over the



whole of the region where the early Norman-Russ princes had borne sway, and approached within one hundred miles of Moscow itself. In the great square of Warsaw, where the citizens were "massacred" by the Russian garrison during the excited times of the last insurrection, there is a monument erected to the memory of King Sigismund III. by his son and successor Ladislas, which records how Moscow was conquered in 1611 by the said Sigismund; a fact which reminds us, as Mr. Sutherland Edwards remarks in his "Polish Captivity," that the metropolitan Philarete, father of the first of the Romanoff line of Czars, was carried off a prisoner to Poland, and confined there for nine years, for refusing to crown this same Ladislas as sovereign of Muscovy. The monument also tells that the conquering Sigismund had "recaptured" Smolensk from the Russians; but it had not been standing ten years when the "key of Moscow" had been "recaptured" again by the Russians, and this time kept.

Before the time of Sigismund and Ladislas, who were Swedish princes, the power of Poland had begun to disintegrate. The old dynasty of Jagellon, in which the crown was hereditary, had ended, and the turbulent and greedy landowning class were rapidly absorbing to themselves all real authority in the state. The capital had been removed from Cracow, the "cradle and last resting-place of Polish independence," to Warsaw, where the court and the great nobles spent their time in dissipation and intrigue, and occasionally in bloody quarrels. The wars against Russia and her other neighbours brought Poland no good, in spite of the unfailing dash and bravery of her mounted

soldiery and the skill of her military commanders. Yet, less than one hundred years before the first partition of Poland, by the Empresses Catherine and Maria Theresa and Frederick the Great of Prussia, a Polish army, under John Sobieski, saved Europe when the Turks laid siege to Vienna.

Sobieski, however, great warrior and statesman though he was, made a terrible breach in the defences of his country when he bartered Kiev to the Russians. On his death, anarchy crept more rapidly into the constitution of Poland. The "noble" class, to which belonged all holding land, grasped after new powers and privileges on the elevation of every new monarch, and the ruler became a mere puppet in the hands of a factious oligarchy. The great bulk of the people, meanwhile, had no share in Polish rights or liberties, but were in a miserably poor, degraded, and enslaved condition. The choice of a King of Poland became the great public scandal and danger of Europe. The supporters of rival candidates assembled in Warsaw resembled more in attitude and number hostile armies, than electors met to perform a patriotic duty. Each powerful magnate of the land—the heads of the houses of Czartoryski, Zamoyski, Radziwill, Potocki, Sapeha, Wielopolski, and the rest—could bring thousands of votes and of spears in support of the side he favoured. At the same time, the absurd law of the Libetum Veto, by which each member of the Diet had the right to annul the whole proceedings by his individual vote, opened a wide door for corruption and cabal, and made it almost impossible to come to a decision. Poland, in fact, was "vetoed" to death. Her own children busied

themselves in hastening her disintegration. Every neighbour had a finger or a hand in the series of broils and plots which the Poles called their national affairs. Repeatedly the squabbles of the Diet ended in a civil war, which spread into a general European war.

The last King of Poland, Stanislas Augustus Poniatowski, was a mere nominee of Russia. Russian troops garrisoned the country, and Russian hands guided the administration. It must be confessed that little sorrow was expressed, even in freedom-loving England, when the three Partitioning Powers proceeded to "concentrate" Poland, by each cutting away a large slice of territory, Russia, of course, appropriating the lion's share. The Poles were at length roused to a sense of the absolute necessity of a united national feeling, if their country was to be saved from utter ruin. The Diet, in 1791, decreed a new and liberal constitution, by which, among other things, the emancipation of the serfs was provided for. This gave the signal for the second partition, a private burglarious arrangement between Russia and Prussia; and then followed the heroic struggle led by Kosciusko to cast out the invaders, ending in the entry of Suvaroff into Warsaw, over the blood-stained ashes of Prague, and the complete dismemberment of 1795.

Hope rose high again in Polish bosoms when Buonaparte began to humble their enemies, the Partitioning Powers. No soldiers fought more bravely, or clung more devotedly to the cause of the great Emperor, than his Polish legions. They shared in his ruin; and since the "grand-duchy of Warsaw" was handed over to the personal rule of the Czars, under the name of the Kingdom of Poland, as a separate monarchy, limited by con-

stitutional rights, only evil fortune has befallen the cause of the Poles. The desperate rising of 1830-31 was punished by the slaughter that attended Paskievitch's capture of Warsaw; by executions, confiscations, wholesale conscription, and the transportation of thousands of families to Siberia; by the cancelling of constitutional liberties and privileges, and the proscribing of peculiar Polish costumes and customs, and by the suppression of the Warsaw University and the removal of its library to St. Petersburg. The savage guerilla struggle of 1848 resulted in the taking away of almost the last vestiges of Poland's rights.

Rash should he be, however, who would assume that we have heard the last of the Polish question. The nation lies bound and crushed under the weight of its powerful enemies, but the national spirit is not dead. On the contrary, the Polish people under adversity have developed qualities that were not visible in their days of prosperity. A common hate and a common grief have had power, for a time at least, to weld all classes and factions into patriots, though it has generally happened that with the first smile of good fortune on the national cause old dissensions have broken out. Never were the bravery of Polish soldiers and the devotion of Polish women more splendidly shown than in those ruinous struggles to regain independence. The period of Poland's degradation has likewise been her most brilliant literary era. Well may the conspirators who have compassed her fall wonder whether it is a ghost or a living nation that rises persistently from the grave in which they thought their victim securely laid. It would be hard to pro-

phesy what may be the future fate of a race that has shown so indestructible a love of independence, and such elasticity of spirit under misfortune.

Meanwhile, for Russia's sins and her own, Poland is an integral part of the Russian Empire, and the patriotic instincts of Warsaw are held sternly in check by a large Russian garrison. In the castle, to which Sigismund III. transferred the royal residence from Cracow, Russian authority has established its head-quarters. From the citadel, built by Czar Nicolas, the length and breadth of the Polish capital can be surveyed, and the Russian guns could batter the city to ruins were the townsmen again to rise against the Muscovite. It is the hand of Russia on the throat of Poland; and not for an instant can the ruling power afford to slacken the grasp.

The left bank of the Vistula, on which Warsaw is chiefly built, is high, and the city, with its stately lines of streets, wide squares, and spacious gardens, is picturesquely disposed along the brow of the cliff and on the plain above. Across the broad sandy bed of the stream, here "shallow, ever changing, and divided as Poland itself," is the suburb of Praga or Prague, which has never recovered from Suvaroff's savage handling in 1795, and where lines of houses are thinly scattered amid wide spaces of waste ground. The Vistula, which is to Warsaw and Poland what the Dnieper is to Kiev and Little Russia, is crossed by the railway and old wooden bridges; and lying against the banks are lines of timber boats and rafts laden with grain, which the hardy raftsmen navigate, by means of long poles, from the sources of the river in the Carpathians to its mouth at Danzig, arriving at their destination "lean, long, and brown," having

often, it is said, eaten almost nothing on their river voyage. The castle also commands a view of the Sigismund Place, where, on the 8th April 1831, the conqueror of Moscow and Smolensk looked on from his marble pedestal while Russian steel and lead cleared the square of Warsawian citizens. The Czar Nicolas's jealous fears caused the removal of Thorwaldsen's group in bronze commemorating the brilliant career of Poniatowski; but the statues of Copernicus and John Sobieski still keep alive memories of which Poland is proud. Other public monuments in Warsaw, such as that in the Saxon Square in honour of the Polish generals who remained faithful to the Czar at the time of the great insurrection of half a century ago, are, it is needless to say, the work of Poland's masters, and on these patriots look as the visible tokens of national degradation.

Many are the palaces, patrician mansions, churches, and public buildings of Warsaw; but on the whole there is little that is distinctly Polish, such, for instance, as one finds at the old capital, Cracow, now part of Austrian territory. Still less is there to remind one of Russia, except in the badly-paved condition of the streets, and the way in which magnificence and squalor are jumbled together. The architecture is showy, often meretricious; but the taste displayed is Western, and founded mainly on French canons. The Zamek, the palace of the old sovereigns, contains many art treasures, and is redolent in the associations of the time when Poland was a powerful state. Connected with it is the great hall where the members of the Diet, sat, and squabbled and "vetoed" away their country's liberty. Other palaces are reserved for the transaction of the

business of the government; and few cities are so highly favoured with public parks, drives, promenades, and gardens. Most notable of these latter are those of the Belvidere Palace, whence the Grand Duke Constantine fled when all Poland rose against his harsh rule, and where Prince Gortchakoff died while the country was in the throes of a new rebellion.

Many of the country residences around Warsaw, especially at Ujazdov, and at other spots along the course of the Vistula, vie in internal magnificence, and in the rich park and forest scenery that surrounds them, with the environs of the proudest capitals in Europe; and the high culture, fascinating grace of manner, and warm-hearted hospitality of the old Polish families who inhabit these stately piles, are proverbial.

Warsaw itself, in spite of all its misfortunes and humiliations, ranks as the third city, in point of population, in the empire. It has excellent hotels, a brilliant society, and numerous devices for killing the time pleasantly. It is his own fault if the visitor finds his stay here profitless and wearisome. Away from Warsaw, however, and the country houses of the proprietor class, Poland has few attractions to show. The accommodation for travellers at the small country inns, generally kept by Jews, is execrable. The condition of the roads is so notoriously bad that there is a German proverb that runs, that there are "five elements" in Poland—earth, air, fire, water, and *slush*. The scenery has so much of flatness and sameness, that one sympathizes a little with the French soldier who exclaimed, on seeing that Poland of which he had heard the "exiles" raving so ecstatically, "And these beggars call this a country!"

The ground is not so heavily timbered as is the case farther to the east and north, and the population is more dense. But large spaces are covered with forest, and the cultivated land often consists of clearings made in the heart of the woods, generally near a little lake or a stream. Then there are wide stretches of sand and heath, where the country seems an interminable dead level, though the whole land has a gentle slope towards the north. Interspersed among these barren or wooded tracts are areas containing some of the finest corn-bearing soil in Europe, whence, since time immemorial, vast quantities of grain have been sent for shipment to the ports on the Baltic.

Polish agriculture, however, can hardly be described as in a thriving condition, judged, at least, by the appearance of the peasantry. Picturesque enough they look in their holiday costume, of which a long, braided military tunic, with sash, high boots, and jaunty hat with feather or tassel, frequently form part; and their bearing has a dignity and grace which their German neighbours can never hope to acquire. Their everyday dress, however, is often ragged and meagre enough, and, like their miserable dwellings, speaks only too truly of poverty and wretchedness. Still more sad is the tale told by their cringing manners before superiors, when they grovel on the ground and kiss the hem of their lords' garments. The Polish peasant is charged with being lazy and thriftless. He is said to be much too fond of the potato brandy which is extensively made in the country. He is as fond of flocking on pilgrimages to holy shrines as his brother of Russia—with the difference that his petitions are addressed to the saints of



the Roman Catholic calendar, instead of the canonized of the Orthodox Church; and there are many other points of resemblance between the two peoples in character and habits. But the political union that has for a hundred years existed has done anything but foster good feeling between these two allied races. While we linger in Poland, we are on soil that is more than ever it was alien to Russia.

At Warsaw is the parting of two main routes—one running north-eastward to St. Petersburg; the other more to the southward, for the old capital of Ivan the Terrible on the Moskva. Or we may choose another road, which will carry us south-eastward to the venerable precincts of Kiev, which we have lately left. By whichever route we proceed, the frontiers of Lithuania—a name that once represented a great fact, but is now hardly even a “geographical term”—are reached at a distance of some one hundred versts from Warsaw. And then new changes come to view. We are plainly a stage nearer Asia. Poland was a civilized power, with a brilliant and cultured court, when Lithuania, its dependency, was a semi-barbarous state, with a population barely reclaimed from paganism, and when Muscovy was still crouching abjectly at the feet of the Tartars. A certain brightness and lightness which seem to form part of the Polish landscape, in spite of its monotonous lines, gradually fade from the scene. Something more harsh, neglected, and savage takes their place. A corresponding eclipse is observable in the faces of the people. The fiery vivacity of the “French of the East” slowly obscures into Lithuanic stolidity. It is a race, one can see, in whose history misfortunes have been

largely mingled up; who have so long had to bend their necks under a heavy yoke of servitude, that they can scarcely straighten themselves up and believe that they are men.

By the route that leads to St. Petersburg and to the pushing, ambitious Russia of to-day, we cross parts of the governments of Vilna, Kovno, and Vitebsk; by that which proceeds to Moscow and the soul of the old conservative Russia that is passing away, Grodno, Minsk, and Moghilev are traversed. These six governments compose what is generally known as Western Russia, though Volhynia and Podolia are for departmental purposes included. Their area extends to one hundred and eighteen thousand square miles—larger than the kingdom of Italy—and they have a population of six and a quarter millions of souls. The first three are on the northern side of the water-shed, and are drained by the Niemen and Dwina; the three latter are, for the most part, on the upper streams of the Dnieper and its tributary the Pripet. All were comprehended within the ancient limits of Lithuania, which in the time of its greatest extension also included, in addition to Poland, Little Russia and large parts of Great Russia, of the Baltic Provinces, and of Austria. The eastern districts, chiefly peopled by Slavs, are known as "White Russia;" and the western, Grodno, Minsk, and Vilna, where Lithuanians most abound, as "Black Russia." Mingle these two peasant races together, in greater or less proportion, with an overflow of Poles on that frontier, sprinkle thickly throughout with Jews, and place on the top a Polish or Polanized landlord class—generally non-resident, and seldom in sympathy either in religion or race with their dependants—place them in a

flat and uninteresting country, where fertile lands are mixed up with vast tracts of swamp and forest, unreclaimed heath and sandy barren, and you will have an idea of the population and condition of Lithuania of to-day.

It is a border land of races and creeds which has unfortunately no natural border. During one short period of its political history, when its two neighbours, Poland and Russia, were weakened, it suddenly grew into the leading power in Eastern Europe, and threatened to absorb them. But it ended in being crushed between them, and was then leisurely swallowed by Russia. It was the last great stronghold of pagan worship in Europe, and here Western Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy had a long, noisy, and bloody settlement with each other, before heathenism was extirpated, and the landmarks of the two Christian religions laid down. In the end Russian influence triumphed in the religious as in the political struggle; and the Greek Uniate body, which represented the temporary compromise between the two Churches, has lately been dragged in a very summary way into the Orthodox fold. Protestantism, however, has here gained a footing which it possesses in few other parts of the Russian Empire, and its adherents are chiefly to be found in "Black Russia."

Poles and Muscovites, Turks and Tartars, Germans, Swedes, and French have marched across this land, and chosen it as a field on which to settle their quarrels; and whichever side won, the unfortunate inhabitants were certain to be losers. Glimpses will be got of the chief episodes in these intricate and prolonged struggles as we pass along, but there is first something to be said

of the general aspect of the country and mode of life of the various peoples that occupy Western Russia.

There have been improvements of late years, and especially since the abolition of serfage; but the main impression still gathered from a run across Lithuania is that of a land where man has, as yet, made but feeble efforts to tame the savageness of nature, and where even the works of his own hands show signs of dilapidation and decay. In the south of the country there is perhaps more marshy land than forest, and in the north more forest than morass; towards the eastern side the little townships scattered over the waste of heath and wood seem to be sprinkled rather more thickly, and some improvement in the direction of tidiness and cleanliness may be detected in the dress and habitations of the people.

But such changes as these are proceed gradually, and do not alter the sense of oppressive dulness. The improvements only show how much has still to be done before a decent standard of prosperity and comfort is attained. The traveller draws back his head from the carriage window long before the lights have faded from the bare downs or the sombre shadows have darkened under the pine-woods. He gets tired of catching peeps of squalid groups in the dirty, crooked streets of the little towns; of long-coated peasants trudging homeward by the side of their waggons; of fantastic little village spires breaking the horizon; of a stream winding its slow way seaward, or a canal with a barge laden with rye or timber, bound on a similar journey; of rickety, unpicturesque bridges and roads in all stages of disrepair; in short, of a general air of

blight and impoverishment; and he wraps himself up as comfortably as possible in his corner, and fervently wishes that Lithuania were well behind him and Moscow at hand.

Several causes might be assigned for this mildewed look, which perhaps, after all, is only made specially visible here from the close neighbourhood of this region to the active, bustling life of Western Europe. There has never, for one thing, been much sympathy between the tillers of the soil and their lords and masters. Between the *pans* and the serfs there has always been a great gulf fixed; and nowhere has the yoke of servitude pressed with more unmitigated weight upon the neck of the *moujik* than in Lithuania. Elsewhere in Russia there were close bands of religion and race uniting the two classes. Here the landowners for centuries professed a creed that the body of their people execrated as heresy; if they were not actually of alien race, they were in language, feeling, and civilization Polish. The boyards in the Volga and Oka countries differed from their bondsmen mainly in social rank. Till a comparatively recent date there was little in their education, their tastes, or even the surroundings of their life to distinguish them from the peasantry around them. Mr. Mackenzie Wallace, in his lively sketch of the "small laird," such as still exists in the more out-of-the-way corners of Russia, exhibits him as but little exalted in his views of life or refinement of manners above his humblest neighbours—that he is a Russian of the Russians, bigoted in his orthodoxy, superstitious, intensely conservative of old prejudices and customs; with many traits of medieval rudeness and coarseness lingering about his

person and his mansion, and with his vision bounded by the narrow interests of his family and his district.

But the Lithuanian nobles since the days of the Jagellons, and to a great extent still, have been the representatives of another culture. Their lives were mostly spent amid the diversions of Warsaw, or Cracow, or Vilna, where a close imitation was attempted of the brilliancy and gaiety of the French court, where art and literature were cultivated, and where life sped on in a round of pleasure and intrigue, of which their unlucky serfs could have as little conception as participation. They held themselves not only as immeasurably superior in social station, but scarcely even of the same flesh and blood. There was little in the scenery or society of their vast domains to tempt them down to them. Each magnate had his dreary residence scores of miles distant from that of his next neighbour of rank. Sport in the forests, or the collection of the rents and dues gathered with unsparing hand by his Hebrew stewards, was often the only errand that brought the noble down to his lands. They were not much loved by their people, these Polanized noblemen, and they scarcely deserved to be. The state of rich and poor was very much what an American writer has somewhat unjustly described as that of existing Russian society—a company of “wolves and swine.” There were risings of the peasantry in districts where their tyrants were more than ordinarily cruel and rapacious, but they were generally of an isolated and local character. There were race and religious divisions among the people themselves, and their spirits were cowed by long familiarity with oppression. The irksome and

heavy burden of Polish supremacy, however, had an important effect in disposing the inhabitants to accept with resignation the transfer of their country to the rule of the Czar of Muscovy as the close of the long struggle between that state and Poland.

But besides his Sarmatian master, another figure has sat on the shoulders of the heavy-laden peasant of Lithuania and White Russia, and clung to his neck with the tenacity of an Old Man of the Sea. This is the Jew. We found him a familiar feature of the towns of Volhynia and Podolia; and here he is in even greater force. The scent grows steadily stronger as we approach the frontiers of Poland proper. The race has been proverbially a down-trodden, persecuted, and abused one for some two thousand years. Here for some centuries the Jews had enjoyed comparative favour, or at least immunity from oppression. One wishes to trace some pleasant fruits of their prosperity in their condition and influence. But it must be admitted that even the most impartial and most well-disposed of travellers have been able to furnish only meagre materials for so attractive a picture.

The Jew is not loved by the Gentiles among whom he dwells without mingling; and in some respects he is even more offensive to the moral and physical senses of outsiders. He is keen-witted, frugal, patient, long-suffering, persevering, capable of intense application and mental study; an unrivalled hand at a bargain; learned often, after his way, in the law and its "interpretation," and in many cases scrupulously guiding his conduct by these lights. To his own people he is generally charitable and even open-handed. He is

tenaciously attached to his faith, deeply reverent towards his spiritual superiors, and cherishes a touching affection for the distant land of his fathers, in which, if possible, he contrives to have his bones laid. But his charity seldom goes beyond the bounds of his race, or rather of his sect.

The physique of the typical Israelite bears an unmistakable impress of his mode of life. He is meagre and undersized of frame, with a weak chest, stooping shoulders, and eager, shambling gait. He lives in stuffy, unwholesome dens, cooped up with unknown swarms of his relations and dependants in filthy, undrained lanes and streets. The occupation of his tribe for centuries has allowed no free play for the muscles or exercise of the lungs. Unwholesome air, innutritious and insufficient food, late vigils, and an unslaked thirst for gain, have pinched and paled his features. Their dress consists of a linen shirt and drawers, covered by a long black robe dangling loosely about their legs, and fastened in front by silver clasps, and on the head they wear a fur cap or round broad-brimmed hat. The Jew rarely learns a handicraft; he is hardly ever known to devote himself to agriculture. Attempts have been made to found Jewish agricultural colonies in remote parts of the Russian dominions, but they have been miserable failures. The race are true dwellers in the towns, and have neither calling nor pleasure in the country. Some occupations are almost set apart for them—such as those of butchers and innkeepers; but they are mostly such as exercise the wits rather than the hands. They are the stewards, the factors, and the *factotums* of the nobility; the store and provision dealers, the post-hirers,



the ferry contractors, the distillers, the money-changers, and, of course, the money-lenders of the community. Ukases have been issued to prevent the wholesale importation by them of the old clothes of Western Europe. They have a finger or a whole hand in every trade and in most men's business.

When they first began to gain footing in this quarter has not been accurately traced. They came from all points of the compass, but chiefly, perhaps, from Germany, during the times of persecution. The rulers of Lithuania and Poland needed money for war and pleasure, and were not scrupulous as to the sources from which they obtained aid. The Jews, while opening their purse-strings, were able to make conditions on behalf of their co-religionists. New privileges were granted to them in the time of Casimir the Great of Poland, whose favourite, a beautiful Jewess named Esther, exerted herself, like her namesake of old, to obtain favour for the chosen people; and Poland and Lithuania became the "Jew's Paradise." The race, it is said, is increasing rapidly, in spite of its weakness physically, through the early marriages which are contracted—the youths often marrying when they are fifteen or sixteen years of age, and girls still earlier. The total Jewish population of the Russian Empire is now estimated at not far short of three million, and is chiefly collected in these western governments. They toil not, neither do they spin; they add little directly to the producing power of the country; but they exercise a great and secret influence in society and in the state, and—if you take the word of a certain school of Russian politicians—an influence at least as much for evil as for good.

All this, of course, does not excuse the brutal and cowardly persecution to which the Jews have recently been exposed in these eastern countries. The anti-Jewish riots which broke out at Kiev, Odessa, Elisabetgrad, and other towns in the south-west, afterwards spreading to the Polish provinces, must to all right-thinking minds appear as a disgrace to modern civilization. Men, women, and children were murdered; the houses in the Jewish quarters plundered and burned, and the inmates turned homeless into the streets; and the worst scenes of the mob ferocity and intolerance of the middle ages re-enacted at the end of the nineteenth century. There are not wanting ugly proofs that these atrocities were deliberately planned, and that the anti-Jewish feeling had no higher root than vulgar envy and greed. A heavy share of the discredit of these scenes falls on the Russian authorities, who, if they did not actually encourage, took little pains to prevent, to suppress, or to punish these displays of Christian resentment.

The peasantry of Western Russia are mostly of that shade of the dominant race of the empire known as "White Russians." Outward appearances and popular opinion do not assign them a high place among the Slav peoples. They are, as a rule, smaller of stature, ruder, and more ignorant than the average Russians. The national faults are slightly exaggerated and the national virtues slightly obscured among them. They bear signs of generations of oppression by foreign masters in their character, as well as in their physique and their industrial and social state. Superlative cleanliness, truthfulness, and temperance have never been among the strong points of the Russian; and the White Russian

assuredly is not a shining example of any of these virtues.

But there is much to excuse him. It is not fair to try him by our standards. In judging of his honesty of word and deed, it must be remembered how short a time it is since he escaped from thralldom, how much he is brought into association with low standards of commercial morals, and that there are already signs of improvement. It may be that his indulgence in strong drink is only regulated by his opportunities; and it is true that the quantities of spirits manufactured, after making allowance for what is exported, seem to provide the population with more liquor than is good for them. But we ought to bear in mind how monotonous is the daily routine of his life, how cheerless and comfortless his surroundings, and how few are his opportunities of partaking of more healthy and intellectual amusements, were his taste so far educated as to enjoy them.

Side by side with the White Russian is an individual to whom the fates have, if possible, been still more unkind. This is the Lithuanian, whose characteristic figure and language are gradually, it is to be feared, becoming more rare in Lithuania. At present the race count, it is believed, some one million of souls in the division of Western Russia, including in this number the Lett branch of the family. Over half a million more—for the most part Letts—are found in Livonia and other parts of the Baltic provinces. The district of Augustowo, in the Kingdom of Poland, and Gumbinnen, in East Prussia, are also Lithuanian; indeed, the aboriginal inhabitants of the Prussian provinces bordering on the Baltic were of this

stock, and their language has only in recent times become extinct. The Lithuanians are, as a rule, tall men, of rather clumsy build, blue-eyed, and fair and even flaxen haired, with prominent and well-formed features, and a stolid expression. The women among them possess not seldom the gift of beauty, of a robust and blooming type.

Like their Slav cousins, they are tillers of the soil; their characters and habits have been moulded in the same hard school of toil and endurance. Less quick and impulsive in temperament than the Russians, they are credited with being even more inert and lazy at work. In their capacity for hard drinking, they will not yield the palm to any Slav. Many are Protestant; some belong to the Catholic faith; the bulk of them are Orthodox. But if you could take one of these big, slow-moving, slow-thinking Lithuanian peasants, and analyze his religious beliefs and ideas, you would probably be surprised to find how large is the alloy of ancient heathenism mixed up with his Christianity. It is not perhaps that he is more ignorant and superstitious than his Russ neighbour. Both have in a nearly equal degree a belief in signs and marvels, in dreams and omens, in magic and witchcraft, in sheeted spectre and grim were-wolf. Both are apt to make a "fetish" of the observances of their faith, which are often relics of traditional pagan practices. But to the Lithuanian the old gods are more near and more real than to almost any other European people. Perkun, the thunder god, the equivalent of Perun of the Slavs, still exacts a secret homage; the sacred groves of their ancestors, if they are no longer objects of worship, are feared and shunned as spots where demoniacal influences are potent; their popular sagas, tales, and

riddles not only relate the great exploits of their national heroes, but the wonderful deeds of the gods and goddesses of their mythology, who are no less real to them than the historical personages.

The Lithuanians were pagans for three or four centuries after the peoples about them had been converted to Christianity by apostles from the Greek or the Latin Church; and the most glorious period of their history was that in which they started suddenly into power, in resistance to the proselytizing efforts of the soldiers of the Cross. Little is known of them till the eleventh century, when we find them a rude and poor people, paying tribute of birch bark and brooms, the only produce their woods and marshes afforded, to the Russian princes of Polotsk, Smolensk, or Galitch. That they were the Ostrogoths that followed Odoacer into Italy, and brought back to their own wild lands some of those soft musical tones that distinguish their tongue from that of their kin, it would be rash to say. But it seems certain that they belong to the Slavonic branch of the great Aryan family tree, but several degrees farther removed from the Russians than even the Poles and Bohemians; and it is said that their language has a closer resemblance to the Sanscrit mother-tongue than any other in Europe.

Lett, Lithuanian, Pruss, and Yatshwing, they dwelt in the depths of their forests, under the rule of their high priest or *krive*, who had below him lower orders of priests and female votaries, worshipping the sacred fire that burned constantly in front of Perkun and the enchanted serpents; or scouring forth on raids, mounted on their hardy ponies of the breed for which

this country is still famous, armed with clubs and staves, and blowing barbaric blasts on their long trumpets.

Then in the Crusading times Adalbert, the Bishop of Riga, in Livonia, organized his Order of the Sword-Bearers, who set to work with fire and sword to Christianize these heathen people; and by-and-by the Sword-Bearers were joined in the holy work by the famous Teutonic Knights. Provinces on the Baltic were conquered; towns and villages captured and burned far in the interior; and the people slain or enslaved. They speak of three hundred thousand having been slaughtered or sold in this crusade. But the Lithuanians were stubborn in their attachment to their ancient divinities. Time after time, after having been dragged within the pale of the Church, they jumped into their rivers to wash off the stains of baptism so soon as the oppressors' backs were turned. The long spears of the German knights began to penetrate the inmost recesses of their sacred groves. Despair pricked them to action; and they had learned something of the new weapons and modes of warfare from their enemies.

A certain Mindvog arose early in the thirteenth century, and gathered the broken tribes into a kingdom of Lithuania, and waged a not unequal strife both with Germans and Russians. But it was a century later ere the great Lithuanic hero Gedimin came forward to avenge his race on their foes, by carrying the war into their own territory. He conquered the Russian provinces to the east and south, incorporated Volhynia and Little Russia in his territory, and entered Kiev in triumph. His capital—the new capital of Russia it may be called, for the Tartar now held all the Volga countries—he fixed

at Vilna, the centre of old Lithuania ; and here and at his other residence of Novogrodsch he allowed Greek churches to be built. A tolerant as well as an able man was Gedimin ; and though he remained a pagan, he encouraged both Roman and Orthodox Christianity, and invited workmen and artists from the west to beautify his capital and teach his people trades. When he died, his body, after the manner of his ancestors, was " burned in a caldron, with his war-horse and favourite groom." The descendants of Gedimin share with those of Ruric the right to the title of *knyaz*, or " prince," in Russia.

A still more redoubtable warrior was his son Olgerd, who reduced the proud republics of Novgorod and Pskov to submission, made the Crimea his vassal, cleared the lower Dnieper countries of the Tartars, and marched three times in triumph to the gates of Moscow. His son was Jagellon, who, marrying in 1386 Hedwig, the heiress of Poland, united that country to Lithuania, and was the founder of a dynasty. It was he that effected the Christianization of his people, in the same summary fashion<sup>1</sup> that Vladimir some four hundred years earlier had converted the Slavs of Kiev. " They were divided," says M. Rambaud in his " History of Russia," " into groups, and the priest then sprinkled them with holy water, pronouncing, as he did so, a name of the Latin calendar. To one group he gave the name of Peter, to another that of Paul or John. He overthrew the idol Perkun, extinguished the sacred fire that burned in the castle of Vilna, killed the holy serpents, and cut down the magic woods."

But from Jagellon's days the Lithuanians count the decadence of their greatness ; henceforth they were more or less an appanage of Poland. One more great hero

they had—Witout, the grandson of Gedimin, who headed the national cause, and compelled Jagellon to yield him the government of the grand-duchy. Witout captured Smolensk, and conceived the grand scheme of driving out the Mongols, and uniting the whole of Russia under his sceptre. But his great army, composed of Poles, Lithuanians, Germans, and Russians, was utterly defeated by the Khan of the Golden Horde on the Vorskla, near Poltava, almost on the site of Charles the Twelfth's disaster; and the ambitious Witout turned his attention to the west. At Tannenberg, in 1410, he completely broke the power of the Teutonic Order, which so long had been a thorn in the side of Russia. He intrigued and negotiated with Pope and Emperor, and had strong hopes of being anointed and recognized as a Catholic king. Grand fêtes were given by him at Vilna, where, we are told, he was attended by grand-duke and hospodar, by the King of Poland and the Khan of the Crimea, the Metropolitan of Moscow, the Master of the Teutonic Knights, and the ambassadors of the Emperors of the East; and where each day "seven hundred oxen, fourteen hundred sheep, and game in proportion" were consumed. In the midst of this revelry, the word came to the old man of eighty that the crown for which he had angled and fought was not to be his, and he died of the disappointment. With him the separate history of Lithuania came to an end; it gradually merged in Poland, the Treaty of Lublin completing the union in 1569.

Vilna, which has been the centre of most of the great events in Lithuanian history, is still a place of considerable size, situated at the junction of the Vilia and the Vileyka rivers, tributaries of the Niemen. By that



stream, and by the railway lines from Königsberg and Warsaw leading towards the old and new capitals of Russia, a good deal of trade reaches Vilna, and it is also the seat of large leather and textile manufactories and extensive distilleries. Of its population of 60,000 or 70,000, one-third are said to be Jews, who have got the commerce of the place mainly into their hands. Other importance Vilna no longer possesses. Its star, like that of the other seats of empire we have been visiting, has set. On the castle hill above the river are the ruins of the old palace of the Grand Dukes, where Gedimin, Olgerd, and Witout feasted, and where the "sacred fire" was kept alive till quenched by the Jagellons. The oldest of the sacred places where modern Vilna worships is the Cathedral of St. Stanislas, built in 1367, when Olgerd was thundering at the gates of Moscow.

The University of Vilna, founded first as a Jesuit college in 1578, was suppressed by an imperial ukase in 1832, and the great library of two hundred thousand volumes was transferred to St. Petersburg. Learning and literature deserted Vilna in the train of political power, and it has been abandoned, as has been said, to the Jews. A false gleam of returning grandeur shone on it for a few weeks in 1812. The "grand army" crossed the Niemen at Kovno, and marched upon Vilna—the Russians, whose head-quarters had been at the old Lithuanian capital, falling back before it. Napoleon entered the city in triumph, the nobility crowded around him with ardour, and the restoration of the old Lithuanian state was proclaimed.

A far different entry was that which was wit-

nessed a few months later, when the city gates opened to receive the miserable remnants of that once magnificent warrior host, thus far on their way back to France. Reduced to forty thousand men, they had crossed the Beresina, a tributary of the Dnieper, in the province of Minsk, in front of an enemy one hundred and fifty thousand strong, that dared not attack the desperate men. Hardly had they reached the shelter of the walls of Vilna, where they hoped for a short reprieve from exposure, fatigue, and fighting, when the guns of the Russians were heard, and they had to continue their flight, abandoning the thousands of sick and wounded, who, it is said, were flung out of the windows and trampled to death in the streets, while the Cossacks fell upon and massacred the camp-followers. Thirty thousand bodies, according to Rambaud, were burned on piles.

There is little to attract us to Kovno, which has just been mentioned. It is a place of some eight thousand inhabitants, dating back to the twelfth century, contains the usual large proportion of Jews, is the capital of a government, and does a considerable trade by the Niemen, on which it is situated. Grodno, higher up the Niemen, and adjoining Vilna on the southern side, is a government to which more interest attaches. The town of Grodno is almost as celebrated in Lithuanian annals as Vilna itself. It was one of the earliest of the cities in the grand-duchy, dating back to the twelfth century. Even at that early period it had become an appanage of the family of Ruric; and a church arose in this heathen quarter dedicated to St. Boris and St. Gleb, the two murdered sons of the apostolic Vladimir, who are so

inseparably associated together in the secular and ecclesiastical legends of Russia. A convent—that of St. Basil—was founded about the same time, and still exists.

The great King Stephen Batory of Poland took much interest in the welfare of the Orthodox of Grodno, and interfered to prevent the destruction with which they were threatened by the Jesuits. There were other Polish monarchs who did not scorn to make it an occasional residence. The celebrated John Casimir had his *château* in the neighbourhood at Bialystok, a magnificent structure in Italian style, once known as the Versailles of Poland, but now become a ladies' school. August III. built here a palace; and it was for some time the headquarters of Charles XII. of Sweden during his Lithuanian campaigns. It was at one period appointed that the Polish Diet should meet here for every third session, and it was at Grodno that the representatives of the ancient kingdom decreed its dismemberment, and the last phantom monarch, Stanislas Augustus, signed his abdication. Apart from these historic reminiscences, Grodno is a dull little town; it boasts no trade to speak of, and the botanic gardens, founded by Stanislas Augustus, are no longer an attraction to men of science.

In this province of Grodno there is a broad domain set apart for an "aborigine" of even earlier date than the Lithuanian, and who probably was in full possession of the deep thickets and brakes of this forest region for thousands of years before the human fancy had begun to people them with gods and demigods, and to set them apart for the worship of Perkun and the sacred serpents. The wood of Belovegie, occupying an area of many square miles around the sources of the river Narev, a

tributary of the Niemen, still protects the last representatives of the aurochs, the wild ox that in the Roman days had a wide range over Europe, and is believed by some to be the original stock from which our domestic cattle have sprung. It is supposed that a thousand head of these wild cattle still rove at will in the marshy recesses of Belovegie; and they are protected by strict forest laws. It was a favourite hunting-ground of the kings of Poland, and the Czars have occasionally visited it in pursuit of royal sport after the urus and the bear.

These imperial hunting-parties, which in the government of St. Petersburg have become almost a part of the state ceremonials, are brilliant and imposing affairs. The appointments for the chase, which takes place early in the spring, when Bruin has just awakened from his winter's sleep, leave nothing to be desired in the matter of completeness and splendour. Not only the imperial hunters themselves, but the attendant nobles and great civil and military dignitaries are enveloped in the richest furs, and outshine each other in the stylishness of their sledges and their arms. Only one feels that the poor bear has hardly a fair chance among such an army of beaters and hunters. The urus, however, is rarely disturbed in his retreat at Belovegie. By imperial ukase it is even forbidden to cut wood in the forest; and it is to be hoped that this old inhabitant, with his massy front, grand horns, and tawny bison-like mane, will long be preserved as a living relic of the Europe of the past.

Another striking natural feature of this region are the Marshes of Pinsk on the Pripet, in the neighbouring province of Minsk, itself a territory larger than Ireland. There is here, perhaps, the largest extent of fen

country to be found in Europe. Much of this tract has probably not been seen by a stranger since the beginning of last century, when Charles the Twelfth fought and waded his way through it with the fury of a Norse Berserker, cutting a path alternately with his axe and his sword, as his progress was opposed by thick forest or by Russian enemies. Eastward of the marshes is the Beresina, a branch of the Dnieper, famous in the military annals of Charles as well as of Napoleon; and on a tributary of the Beresina is the town of Minsk, where any one who strays so far out of the beaten track of the tourist will be surprised to light upon a small theatre, in addition to the cathedral, archiepiscopal palace, and numerous churches that are the necessary features of every provincial capital, and the narrow, crooked, dirty streets that invariably mark an old Polish *bourg*. If he move farther eastward to the main stream of the Dnieper, and light on Moghilev, the chief town of the government of that name, he will come on evidences of improving conditions of industry and social well-being. Here he will find a considerable trade in a town containing within its decayed ramparts many fine buildings grouped round the great central square, and the importance of which is attested by its being the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Primate of Poland and Russia.

A short step northwards by Orcha takes us across the watershed to the valley of the deep and muddy Dwina, on which is Vitebsk, the principal town of the most northerly of the West Russian provinces. Or the journey may be made by water by one of the canals which in this as in other parts of Russia connect the head-waters

of the various streams, and are the main channels of traffic.

Farther down the Dwina are Polotsk and Duna-burg, important military posts in their day, holding the line of the river, and often subjected to siege and assault by Russians and Poles, Swedes and Livonians. Polotsk is one of the most ancient of Russian towns, having a history reaching back beyond the times of Ruric; Duna-burg was alternately a strong place of the German knighthood and a bulwark of Russia against them. The stormy past of the city of Vitebsk also may be read on the ancient walls and towers along the left bank of the Viteba river, and the crumbling remains of its strong castle on the opposite side of the stream. The three places are now rivals in collecting the raw products and the manufactures of this and the neighbouring provinces, and forwarding them to the port of Riga, at the mouth of the Dwina.

The railways and canals have done much to stimulate the half-slumbering energies of the Western Russian provinces. These countries are full of undeveloped riches; prominent among which are the immense forests of pine, oak, ash, beech, and maple; and groves of lime are abundant in the government of Vilna, where bee-keeping is an extensive industry. Even the marshes and heaths can be made productive with a little care; and this part of Russia will ere long hold a more important agricultural and commercial position than it does at present.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE VOLGA.



F the Dwina is followed for a little way beyond Vitebsk, we are brought back to our starting-point in the Valdai Hills. Its sources are in the sequestered valleys, steep hillsides, and wood-fringed lakelets of that prettily broken country, and its "taproot" is within a verst or two of the lake in which the great river Volga has its beginning. From this point to the outlet of the Volga in the Caspian is a distance of over nine hundred miles as the crow flies: following its great north-eastward and eastward sweeps and its many windings, we have a length of two thousand four hundred miles—greater by nearly a thousand miles than the Danube—the next largest European stream. No one can fully comprehend the phenomena of Russian history and civilization who does not have in his mind an adequate conception of the magnitude and the importance of the Volga.

With the Russians themselves it is the "Mother Volga,"—the great river of the world. It has moulded their destinies, shaped their national character, and influenced incomparably more than any other natural feature of the country their social and industrial con-

dition. It has been said that the history of Russia may be resolved into the history of four rivers and four towns in their basins—the Volkhov, and Novgorod the Great; the Dnieper, and Kiev; the Volga, and Moscow; and the Neva, and St. Petersburg: and the greatest of these is the Volga. It is the vertebral column, or rather the spinal marrow of Russia. Two hundred years ago, probably nine-tenths of the subjects of the Czars dwelt upon it; and a majority of the Russian race are still settled in its basin. It drains an area of five hundred and fifty-eight thousand square miles, equal to five times that of the British Islands. One of its affluents, the Kama, is only second to the Danube among the rivers of Europe. The Oka and its tributaries—on one of which is situated the world-famous city of Moscow—water a territory of one hundred and twenty-seven thousand square miles.

The breadth and the volume of the great stream are worthy of its magnificent length. Its channel is navigable to its source; its width from bank to bank in its middle course is little less than a mile; and it discharges its waters into the Caspian by over seventy mouths. By the comprehensive system of canals that connect the head-waters of all the important Russian rivers, it communicates with the White Sea, the Baltic, and the Euxine. Thus a canal from Tula, on the Upa, a branch of the Oka, connects the Volga with the Don; and it is proposed to form another water-way joining the two main streams at the point on their lower courses where they approach within fifty miles of each other. A double link unites the Volga to Kiev—through the upper Dnieper and through the Oka and Desna; and by the same channels there is continuous water-carriage to the Niemen and the



Baltic. An alternative route to the Baltic may be chosen by way of the Dwina. Most important of all are the routes leading under the walls of St. Petersburg to the Gulf of Finland. Leaving the Volga at Tver, the Tvertza may be followed until it merges, at Vishni-Volotchok, into the Msta, a canal-like stream that conducts to Lake Ilmen and the Volkhov; or following up the Mologa, a lower tributary of the Volga, the head stream of the Sias can be reached; or, again, ascending the Szektna, the Bielo or White Lake may be entered, which also reaches an arm to Lake Ladoga and its outlet the Neva. The Neva, indeed, has become, as it were, a second or European mouth of the Volga, and the set-off to its Asiatic mouth at Astrakhan. Lake Ladoga has canal communication with the White Sea; and the great eastern tributary of the Volga, the Kama, has independent connection with the Dwina and the Arctic Ocean.

With this bewildering network of channels all feeding the main avenue with their contribution of trade, one may imagine how extensive and how varied is the commerce of which the Volga is the centre. It still continues to be to a great extent the principal route by which the products of Northern and Central Asia are exchanged for those of Europe; but it is as the medium for the collection and distribution of the internal riches of the Russian world itself that it possesses its chief importance. No fewer than fifteen thousand vessels of various classes ply upon its bosom. In the summer season a quarter of a million of workmen from other parts of the empire resort thither. The waters are turned into foam by the paddles of five hundred steamboats. The long lines of wooden wharves are piled with

merchandise in course of being landed or shipped; and the extensive depôts are being rapidly emptied and filled again with grain and other produce of the rich provinces on the Oka and Volga.

As the great fair at Nishni-Novgorod approaches, the bustle and activity on the river and along its banks become more intense. Merchants from Odessa and Riga; native and foreign speculators in every variety of merchandise exchanged between the East and the West; Russian peasants and German colonists, anxious to sell the surplus produce of their fields; dealers in furs and peltries from Paris or Vienna, come to do business with rough trappers from the Kama or Siberia; travellers for Manchester and Sheffield houses; carriers of brick tea from the Chinese frontiers; Persians, Bokharians, and Turcomans, with silks or horses for sale; venders of precious stones and metals from the Ural range and Tobolsk; Finnish lumbermen; Tartar packmen; Kirghiz and Kalmuk shepherds and horse-rearers; fabricators of axes, nets, sheepskin coats, saddles, fur-caps, boots, each from the little villages devoted to these special industries along the Volga and its branches; with a sprinkling of professional sightseers from Western Europe and America,—are all on their flight by routes innumerable to the great mart that draws together for a few weeks one hundred thousand strangers from the ends of the earth.

The conveyance of all these passengers and their wares was formerly attended by fearful toil and suffering. The motive-power of the current could generally be employed in transporting goods down stream, but it was different where the rivers had to be ascended. The rafts of timber, the

barges filled with grain, hides, bales of merchandise, and cattle, were dragged by tow-ropes up the stream by ill-treated, broken-spirited horses or oxen, or by the main strength of the *borlaks*, a class of men noted for their herculean frames and their brutalized condition. Steam has changed all that. The human beasts of burden are no longer a feature of the Volga life. Instead, powerful tug-steamers will be met breasting the current, and drawing behind them a whole ~~flotilla~~ flotilla of barges and other river craft.

With the setting in of winter all this busy life is suspended. The stream is frozen over from its source to its mouth, and sometimes an icy covering extends over a large portion of the salt waters of the Caspian Sea. Steamers and sailing ships are laid up for a season; the quays are deserted, the storehouses are closed, and the whirl of the saw-mills is silenced. Traffic goes to sleep until the spring freshets break up the ice, and leave the channel again clear for navigation. But even in the winter the Volga is the centre of such movement as there is. Its frozen surface is the favourite route for travellers whose hard fate compels them to journey in the season of ice and snow; and its ghostly white banks echo night and day to the ring of the passing sledge-bells.

In the ordinary season of travel, nothing specially impressive can be promised to the voyager in the way of natural scenery, beyond what is afforded by the flood of waters itself rolling between its shores fringed by pine and oak. Whatever effect this may have on the mind, the interest wears off as the prospect is repeated with a few changes in detail at every turn of the river.

Though the woods are partially cleared near the margin, the scenery in the upper and middle courses of the river retains the features of a forest land. Scores of thriving towns, hundreds of villages and hamlets, are scattered along the stream; but the distances are so immense that plenty of room is left between the clearings for long stretches of timber-covered shore. The left bank is generally flat, and often marshy; the right, against which the current bears in, making its wide semicircular sweep, is more high and abrupt.

The upper Volga lies within the favourite habitat of the fir, the larch, and the spruce, and pine-woods are the predominating feature of its scenery. Then, in the government of Kazan, the "Oak Belt" is reached, stretching across a great part of Russia, between the fifty-sixth and fifty-third degrees of latitude; and the place of the dark and rigid forms of the cone-bearing trees is usurped by fine specimens of the oak, the beech, and the maple, that change their hues with the changing year.

In this part of its course the Volga cuts through the Zhigulinsky range of hills, which have been highly praised for their picturesque outlines and the pleasing variety of their wooded slopes. A recent visitor to the region admits that the scenery here may be called "pretty," especially when the trees wear the delicate tints of spring, or when they are arrayed in the painted glories of autumn; but it is such an agreeable surprise to meet with anything resembling a range of hills in these parts, that the traveller is willing to be easily satisfied.

Lower down, the banks become bare and shingly. The river receives no more important tributaries, and its chan-

nel is interrupted by frequent sand-banks and shoals. From the top of the sandy slopes that bound the view from the river to right and left, the eye may range over a wide steppe, from which all trace of the higher forms of vegetable life has vanished, and where the short grass is cropped by herds of sheep, horses, and camels, guarded by their Tartar owners. Near the river are the snug homesteads and well-filled granaries of the German colonists, who have been settled in this country since the time of the Empress Elizabeth, side by side with the untidy and ramshackle habitations of the Russian peasants—generally schismatics banished to these wilds for their heresies. Here and there is a small colony of Cossacks, keeping an eye over the movements of the half-nomad dwellers of the steppe; and the glaring dome of the Greek church, the neat spire of the Lutheran chapel, and the blind walls of the Mohammedan mosque testify to the variety of the prevailing creeds. Barer and barer grows the steppe as we proceed, and more and more Eastern the aspect of the scenery and the population, until near the Caspian we find the river girt in by an arid desert, roamed over by Kirghiz and Kalmuk tribes, dwellers in tents, and—the Kalmuks at least—worshippers of Buddha and his living incarnation the Grand Lama of Thibet. The river is already many feet below the level of the ocean, when it begins to break up into branches that form innumerable islands before discharging themselves by seventy mouths into the Caspian.

The principal industry practised on these islands is the sturgeon-fishery. The Volga is the most noted haunt of this noble fish, and from its source, where the

sterlet that furnishes the caviare most prized at the tables of the rich is bred, to the Caspian Sea, which yields gigantic sturgeon of weights running up to two thousand pounds, it has the full run of its waters. The capture of the sturgeon is practised in many different ways, according to the seat of the fishery—with the hook, the harpoon, and the net, from the shore and in large and small boats, by single fishers and by large incorporated companies. Sometimes “flying camps” of fishermen, counting many hundred tents, follow the fish in their migrations up or down the river; and they are accompanied by large moving establishments for extracting the roe and preparing the caviare.

When the first ice begins to cover the river, the sturgeon rush for the sea; but many of them are too late in their movements, and become blockaded in deep pools in the rivers Ural and Volga, where they crowd together in almost solid masses. This gives the opportunity for the first fishing of winter, before the ice breaks up. Crawling over the frozen surface, and peering through the ice covering and the clear water beneath, the Cossack fishermen discover the winter hiding-place of the sturgeon, which are then captured with little trouble. By traditional custom, the yield of this day's fishing is despatched immediately to the palace of the “Father Czar.” Many other varieties of fish are taken in the Volga, and they form an important item in the dietary of the population.

The chase of the seal, on the shores of the Caspian, is also a pursuit that yields a considerable profit to the Kalmuks of the government of Astrakhan. It may seem strange that an animal whose presence we are accustomed

to associate only with Arctic and Antarctic climes should be found in a sea the southern portion of which washes the shores of Persia and is in the latitude of Northern Africa. But in the neighbourhood of the Volga we are constantly meeting with puzzling anomalies and unexpected contrasts. It carries us from under the Arctic circle to semi-tropical lands; from the feeding-grounds of the reindeer to those of the camel, from the neighbourhood of the white bear to the haunts of the lion and tiger; in a word, from Northern Europe to Central Asia. Asiatic and European races have alternately held sway on the river; and representatives of most of them are to be met with in its neighbourhood.

The traveller is sure to chance upon some individual or incident in which the past and the present, the culture of Europe and the barbarism of Northern Asia are oddly blended. For instance, Mr. Schuyler, in journeying down the stream, discovered that one of his fellow-passengers was Prince Ghenghiz, a lineal descendant of his conquering namesake Ghenghiz Khan. This son of the last khan of the Bukeief Horde was found to be a polished and educated gentleman, who for the greater part of the journey was deeply absorbed in the pages of a French novel. A still more incongruous experience was that of Mr. Mackenzie Wallace, whose hair nearly stood on end when, while travelling in the steppe between the Caspian and the Sea of Azov, he was accosted by a venerable person of Circassian lineaments and costume in the broadest Scottish dialect. It turned out that the "Circassian Scotsman" was a scholar educated by the missionaries sent out to this region by an Edinburgh association early in

the present century, and which had thriving stations at Astrakhan and Karass half a century ago.

The aboriginal inhabitants of the Volga countries, peoples of the widely-spread Finnish race, are certain to attract the notice of strangers by their distinctive dress, language, and features. On the main stream of the Volga itself, and chiefly in Kazan, are the Tcherimis—whom Dr. Latham would identify with the famous Arimaspi of the Greek poets—the Tchuvashs, and the Mordvins, all speaking distinct but allied tongues, and holding themselves strictly aloof from mixture with the surrounding Slavs. They are dark-complexioned, shy, taciturn people, who seem to know that their day is hopelessly past, and that their best chance of preserving their ancient languages and customs lies in adopting an attitude of suspicious reserve towards all strangers.

A more promising subject is the "Tartar" inhabitant of Kazan and the neighbouring provinces, who seems to have laid aside most of the barbarous proclivities of his ancestors, and compares not disadvantageously as a merchant, an agriculturist, and a peace-loving citizen with his Russian neighbour. The chances, indeed, are that the Tartar village furnishes a model in cleanliness, in the neat and substantial character of its architecture, and the trim and well-kept condition of the surrounding fields, which the adjoining Slav hamlet might do well to copy.

• Greek proselytism has made little way among these stanch adherents of Islam, and Mohammedanism is tolerated by the state; so that the mosque of the faithful may be seen in each of these timber-built villages, and at morning and evening the cry of the



*muezzin* is heard on their walls, and echoes strangely amid the pine and oak avenues of the Northern forest. At the stated hours for prayer a certain proportion of the voyagers by the Volga steamer, or travellers waiting the change of horses at the wayside post-houses, will be seen to spread their strip of carpet, cast themselves reverently into an attitude of prayer, and remain absorbed in their devotions for several minutes ; and it will be noticed probably that these are not the least intelligent-looking and civilized among the motley crowd. The Tartar—he is much more a Turk by descent and in his physique than a Mongol—has still, however, implanted in him some of the roving tendencies of his forefathers. He is the *beau-ideal* of the peripatetic merchant of the East, and roams far and wide with his pack of bright-coloured wearing apparel, wonderful jewellery, and nicknacks suited to male and female taste—alert, indefatigable, and full of resource, with vivacity sparkling in his keen dark eyes, and persuasion hanging on his nimble tongue.

These and other races, once omnipotent on the Volga, have sunk, however, into insignificance before the encroaching Slav ; but while religion will long interpose a formidable obstacle to the absorption of the Tartar population into the general body of the Russian people, the process of Russification will probably be complete in a few generations in the aboriginal Finnish districts. Mr. Mackenzie Wallace has described the method and the rapidity with which this change is taking place in a passage which is worthy of quotation.

“During my wanderings in these northern provinces,” he says, “I have found villages in every stage of Russifica-

tion. In one, everything seemed thoroughly Finnish; the inhabitants had a reddish olive skin, high cheek-bones, obliquely-set eyes, and a peculiar costume; none of the women and very few of the men could understand Russian, and any Russian who visited the place was regarded as a foreigner. In a second, there were already some Russian inhabitants; the others had lost something of their pure Finnish type; many of the men had discarded the old costume, and spoke Russian fluently, and a Russian visitor was no longer shunned. In a third, the Finnish type was still further weakened; all the men spoke Russian, and nearly all the women understood it; the old male costume had entirely disappeared, and the old female costume was rapidly following it, and intermarriage with the Russian population was no longer rare. In a fourth, intermarriage had almost completely done its work, and the old Finnish element could be detected merely in certain peculiarities of physiognomy and accent."

Even more significant than the influence of the Volga on the commercial development of Russia has been its influence on the political destiny of the country in all periods of its history. The capitals of no fewer than nine of the modern Russian governments—Tver, Jaroslav, Kostroma, Nishni-Novgorod, Kazan, Simbirsk, Samara, Saratov, and Astrakhan—stand on the banks of the main stream itself. Ten other seats of provincial authority in Great Russia are situated on its tributaries—Perm and Viatka, in the basin of the Kama; Penza, on the Sura; and Orel, Kaluga, Tula, Riazan, Tambov, Vladimir, and the great city of Moscow itself, on the Oka and its branches.

Between the new and growing emporiums of trade are scattered the mounds and ruins marking the sites of old and fallen empires—Atel, the capital of the mysterious Khazarian kingdom, with its Judaized monarchs and precocious civilization; the head-quarters of the people who founded the Bulgaria of the Danube, Bolgary, the “great city,” among the rubbish of which are still picked up Greek, Arabic, and Armenian coins and fragments of artistic pottery and carving; Sarai, the seat of Baty Khan and his descendants, lords of the Golden Horde, whose swarms of Mongol horsemen devastated and wrung tribute from all the provinces of Eastern Europe as far as the Oder; and old Kazan, the head city of the Tartar khanate that held Russia in vassalage till the latter half of the sixteenth century.

It was under such rough masters that the young Russian nation on the Volga grew to manhood. Something has already been told of its infancy and early youth—how the nomad incursions from the East into the pleasant steppe lands on the Dnieper, the pressure of the rival Polish, German, and Swedish peoples on the west, and the chronic anarchy and civil war among the crowd of princes struggling for the supreme power, drove great hosts of the Slavs to seek shelter and security in the deep forests of the Volga; and how they there founded new states that absorbed the Finnish peoples, and waxed powerful and populous in proportion as the elder principalities and republics were weakened, until at last they were able to pluck away the palm of pre-eminence from Kiev itself, and carry off the insignia of political and ecclesiastical superiority to the banks of the Kliasma.

It was on the banks of this stream, a tributary of the Oka, that the Russian colonies in the forests first began to consolidate, and the city of Suzdal ere long became the centre of power. It had many rivals—Rostov and Murom (the original appanages of the martyred Boris and Gleb), Tver and Jaroslav, Kolomna and Riazan. But Suzdal was the kernel from which the great trunk and spreading branches of Russian autocracy arose, though its princes soon deserted it for the neighbouring city of Vladimir.

As yet, Moscow and Nishni-Novgorod were not. It was George Dolgুরুky of Suzdal who, while “exploiting” the country watered by the Moskva river, was struck by the commanding site occupied by a few huts on the left bank of the stream; and slaying the owner on some pretext—which the Suzdal princes had never any difficulty in inventing when lands were to be seized—he founded on the spot a log-built town, that afterwards became the capital of the Russian Empire. It was this George, it may be remembered, who first humbled the pride of Kiev, and his successor Andrew Bogoliubski who stormed and plundered that venerable city, depriving it for ever of its leading place among Russian towns. Andrew also was the first Russian autocrat; for he began systematically to bring together by every means, good or bad, the broken fragments of the Russian power and weld them into one, and patiently and mercilessly to tread down every influence both within and without that could compete with that of the prince. Following him in Suzdal was another George, who, descending the Volga on a military excursion about 1220, noticed that nature had marked out its junction with

the Oka as the site of a great commercial metropolis, and here arose Nishni or Lower Novgorod. The traditions of the Finnish inhabitants preserve the memory of the rapidity with which these "backwoods" colonizations proceeded. "The Russian prince," they sing, "descended the Volga: where he threw a handful of earth on the bank, a town sprang up; where he threw a pinch of earth, a village was born."

But an unparalleled, perhaps an irreparable calamity, was about to fall upon Russia. The Mongol hosts of Ghenghiz were already on the march when the piles for the foundations of Nishni-Novgorod were being driven. The Volga princes left their southern brethren to fight alone when the Tartars first appeared on the steppes; but on their second coming, a few years later, under the nephew of the Grand Khan Oktai, they followed a more northerly track, and the barbarian wave broke with irresistible force on the new cities of the Oka and Kliasma. For three years, 1238-40, the land was surrendered to slaughter and pillage; Moscow, Vladimir, Tver, Riazan, all the chief towns and villages, were burned, and the inhabitants massacred or driven into the woods. Grim tokens of Mongol success were sent to the Great Khan by his lieutenants in the shape of sackfuls of human ears; princes of the house of Ruric were "drowned in blood;" atrocities before undreamt of were perpetrated, not in single instances, but in a wholesale manner. The unfortunate Russians could not believe that their terrible enemies were of the human race, but regarded them as demons sent as forerunners of "Anti-christ."

All Russia bent and groaned under the storm; but

when Baty Khan withdrew from the borders of Germany to the Lower Volga, and began to build his capital at Sarai, it began slowly to right itself and adjust itself to its new burden. Half of Christian Europe had become the slaves of a horde of savage heathen horsemen. The heads of the princely houses had to make long journeys to the seat of the Khan of the Golden Horde to intrigue and plot for his favour, to grovel in the dust before him, to wed the daughters of the invader, and to sell their own daughters and sisters to the Tartar lords. Often they had to face the terrible experiences of a journey to the head-quarters of the Grand Khan, on the banks of the Amoor river, at Karakorum in the Desert of Gobi, or at Kambalu, the modern Pekin, traversing the snowy wastes, stony and sandy deserts, dense forests and great chains of mountains, in the hope of securing the *jarlikh* or investiture of their barbaric suzerain, without which their title to rule in their own state was not recognized.

These expeditions to the court of Mangu or Kublai generally occupied two or three years. Arrived there, the aspirant for favour often found that he had travelled the breadth of Asia in vain, and that a more nimble rival had already borne off the coveted honour. Sometimes the weary voyager never returned to Russia, his bones being left in some unknown spot on the way, where fatigue or hunger or robbers had overtaken him. Such a shameful journey was made by Alexander Nevski, one of the heroes of Russian history—who had defeated the Swedes on the Neva, near where the famous Nevski Prospect of St. Petersburg now runs, and the Livonian Knights on the frozen

surface of Lake Peipus—and his example was followed by the Grand Princes of Vladimir and Moscow who succeeded him.

These same princely personages fell into the positions of farmers-general or tax-gatherers for the Tartar khan. They collected his tribute for him—which was in the shape of a poll-tax—gaining his countenance by humbling their turbulent nobles and grinding in the dust their unlucky people. There are not many noble or heroic traits in their character. The gay, light-hearted chivalry of the cavaliers of the Dnieper, or the stern, sober patriotism of the republicans of Novgorod, is not to be looked for in the early history of the Muscovite princes; and as for the more modern culture that had spread eastward as far as Poland, they would probably have scorned it had they known of its existence. They were rude, unscrupulous, ambitious, grasping men, who stuck at no crime or baseness to accomplish their ends, and yet who claim from us a certain admiration for their remarkable astuteness, ability, and tenacity of purpose.

By such qualities the Grand Dukes of Muscovy, from the time of Alexander Nevski to that of Ivan the Terrible—but most notably of all that other Ivan surnamed “the Great” and “the Binder”—extended the limits of their little principality on the Moskva until it embraced not only all the lands on the Upper Volga and its branches above Nishni-Novgorod, but also the Upper Don countries, parts of the old Slav states on the Dnieper, Novgorod and its vast dominions on the slope to the Arctic Sea. They had done this so quietly and gradually as to excite the minimum of resistance from the states absorbed, and of jealousy from their Tartar

masters. The methods they employed were fraud and *finesse*, treaties, marriage alliances, assumption of guardianship over minors, steady, persistent extensions and pretensions of authority—any means rather than force, but force if other means failed, as they often did.

While the vassal was becoming strong, the Tartar overlord was growing decrepit. One united and chivalric attempt only had been made to throw off the barbarian yoke. The Mongol Horde of Baty had adopted the faith of Mohammed; had had its day of great power; and was now breaking up into contending factions, and seemed on the point of dissolution. The Russian princes thought their opportunity had come. A great army was assembled under the Grand Duke Dimitri Donskoi, and marched out to battle, amid miracles and omens and priestly blessings—St. Vladimir in person, it was said, appearing at their head and leading the charge. The Kipchaks and their allies were totally overthrown in a battle fought in 1380 in the plain of Kulikovo on the banks of the Don. The victory happened in an unlucky hour for Russia. Another—and the last—devastating swarm from Central Asia swept over it. Again Moscow and the chief cities were burned—this time not by Mongol tribes from the Altai, but by the Turki tribes from Turkestan, under the orders of the conquering Tamerlane; and the place of the Golden Horde was taken by the three Tartar khanates of Crim Tartary, Astrakhan, and Kazan, the last of these falling heir to Russia's allegiance.

It was not till Ivan the Terrible's time that Muscovy was strong enough to throw off the last shackles of the Tartar domination; and by the conquest of Kazan in



1552, and of Astrakhan in 1554, the first substantial instalments were paid of the heavy debt of retribution which Asia had accumulated in Europe. The destinies of Russia were again in its own hands. Europe stared at the wild creature that issued forth from the woods and claimed a place in the commonwealth of Christian nations. There was so much that was rude and Oriental in the government, the laws, the customs, the religious ideas, and the superstitions of the Muscovites, that it was small wonder that the western peoples hesitated to admit them within the civilized pale. It was not so much that Russia had not had a fair start, like the others, but that it had passed through a long period of suspended animation, while they were enjoying an active and progressive social life. Its sudden resurrection and appearance "in the councils of Europe," after three centuries of hibernation in the forests of the Volga, was as if a rough feudal baron of the *Front-de-Bœuf* type had presented himself at the board of Queen Elizabeth, and taken a seat between Sir Philip Sydney and Lord Bacon.

Travellers, merchants, and diplomatists from the west, who began to flock to the capital of the Czar, wondered and laughed over the astonishing rudeness of the court manners, the extreme brutality and ignorance even of the highest nobility, and the primitive abasement of the people; and the remarkable doings of the Russian ambassadors at the European courts were observed with the half-amused, half-contemptuous interest with which we would regard the behaviour of a deputation from the Negus of Abyssinia. The descriptions given by early English travellers and traders to Muscovy

are full of almost incredible details concerning the manners of the capital, and even of the Czar's palace, the uncouth and barbarous demeanour of personages of the blood-royal, the gross savagery and turbulence of the boyards, and the extreme enslavement of the peasants.

The crack of the knout was heard in the court as well as in the humblest hut in the land; and down to our own day it has continued to be an ominous symbol of Russia's degradation. Not only the old Grand Princes, but Czars of the Romanoff line were in the habit of publicly whipping personages of the highest rank with their own hand. Ivan the Terrible beat and slew his boyards, and killed his eldest son Ivan with blows of his "iron staff."

It is recorded of the Czar Alexis I., the second of the Romanoffs, that so mild and easy of temper was he that he never allowed himself to go beyond "kicks and cuffs." His son, Peter the Great, had his first wife, Eudoxia, repeatedly knouted by his orders; and his only son, the Czarevitch Alexis, died under the lash. Of an aristocracy according to our notions, or of aristocratic feelings, there was indeed none in Russia. During the three hundred years of Tartar rule the blood of the noble families had received large accessions from Mongol and Turkish stocks, though little of such admixture had taken place among the lower orders. Tartar *mirzas* were in many cases appointed lords of the Russian soil and peasantry, and gradually embraced Christianity. The great noble was rather after the Eastern than of the Western model. Under an autocratic government every effort has been made to bridle the power of the nobility and remove out of the way all danger of pos-

sible rivalry from this source, with the result that the Czar has become, in a more literal sense than other Christian sovereigns, the sole "fountain of honour," and rank in Russia a matter of official position rather than of hereditary claim.

With the higher and highest ranks of society so barbarous and uncultured, it may be left to imagination to picture the depths of ignorance and superstition in which the body of the Russian people were steeped. In the course of three centuries the iron of the Tartar fetters had entered their souls. They had broken the links of foreign oppression, but the chain of ancient habit still bound them. They had been shut out from all progressive influences, and thrown on their own resources, and these had not sufficed to keep them abreast of the times; for the Russians are more distinguished for their quickness in imitating the arts and industries of their neighbours than in originating new movements in thought or labour. If they looked towards the west, they met only the averted and hostile faces of rivals—Poles, Swedes, and Germans—opposed to them on grounds of nationality and religion. The more distant countries of Europe—England and France—which had not as yet begun to feel jealousy or apprehension of the new nation that had just achieved its emancipation, were too remote to have a powerful influence on their development, though English merchantmen began to navigate the White Sea, and our flag even floated on the Caspian, while the faces of many of our countrymen—agents of the Muscovy Company, under the protection of the Czar—were to be seen in the crowds that thronged the streets of Moscow. But away from the seats of com-

mercial movement the customs, ideas, and beliefs of times anterior even to feudalism—a patriarchal type of society, which had elsewhere been long obliterated—existed in almost unimpaired strength; and, fostered by many causes, they have continued more or less in force down to the present day.

The chief of all the European streams is almost the only one that does not mingle its waters, with those of the other rivers of the earth, in the great circumfluent ocean, pouring them instead into a salt lake of Inner Asia. The Russian people also—the most powerful, in numbers, at least, of the European nations—had their faces long turned in the same direction as the current of the Volga, and dwelt, first by reason of an evil destiny, and afterwards from prejudice and ignorance, a race apart from others, and taking little share in their interests and aims.

At length, however, a giant in energy and intellect arose in their midst—a man who had at once the keenest vision for their defects and the most absolute power over their persons and property. Peter the Great seized the lagging Russian nation fiercely and roughly by the throat, and dragged it from its moping seclusion in the Volga forests into the full light of modern civilization. Keeping a vice-like hold upon it, he entered on one of the most stupendous “matches against time” ever witnessed in the history of the world, spurning it forward with savage blows and kicks, until he had worn out in the struggle his own herculean strength, but had launched his country on the track of progress on which the nations of the west had already embarked.

From that moment the political supremacy began to leave the banks of the Volga; but Moscow long continued, and still remains, in the most essential respects, the centre of Russia's social and religious life, as of its commercial and industrial activity. In the neighbourhood of the great river is still to be found all that is most characteristic of Russian nature and feelings, observances and prejudices. "Old Russia"—the Russia of Czar Ivan the Terrible, before Peter came with his "reforms" to change the fixed and venerated features of the ancient national life—may be discovered with little trouble under a covering, sometimes a very thin covering, of modern civilization. Moscow has been robbed of much of its importance by its rival, but it is still the symbol and the nucleus of the conservative Muscovy of the past, which is not extinct, but only slowly yielding to the influences of inevitable change. St. Petersburg may be the capital of Russia, but Moscow is still the most remarkable, the most typical, and the most interesting of Russian cities.

## CHAPTER VI.

### MOSCOW.



HERE is little in the environment of Moscow that announces to the traveller his approach to a populous metropolis. No large, and busy towns cluster round the capital, acting as its feeders, and threatening to be its rivals in trade. There is little trace of the increased density of population and cultivated land, the quickening of the current of commerce, the intersecting roads, the chimney-stalks, the forges, and the villas that are usually grouped about a great seat of luxury and business. The old capital of the Czars comes upon the traveller as a surprise. It seems to have dropped down upon the empty waste out of the clouds. Around it, and almost up to its very walls, stretch the interminable plain and forest—the woods more thinned, perhaps, and the scattered villages larger and more closely set than usual, but the scene differing in no material feature from the ordinary aspect of solemn monotony and silent and empty vastness that elsewhere characterize the Russian landscape.

Moscow is the geographical as well as the political and intellectual centre of Great Russia. It is situated on the Moskva, chiefly on the left or northern bank,

half way between the Oka and the parent stream of the Volga. Around it are grouped the old Russ principalities, which the ambition of the Grand Princes of Moscow added one by one to their dominions, until they had gathered in their hands a power capable of grappling with their old Asiatic conquerors, and of rivalling the kingdoms of Europe. Moscow grew at the cost of the surrounding cities, many of which were its elders in date by hundreds of years. It was the policy of its princes to focus here the power, the prestige, and the sanctity with which they surrounded their throne. The impetus and the importance which it obtained in these days have preserved to it, down to our own times, the long lead that it took of its rivals. Though it has been discrowned and almost deserted by its Czars, it is a city of six hundred thousand souls, a metropolis that in wealth and population exceeds nearly tenfold any other city of Great Russia.

The aspect of Moscow is not unworthy of the glorious memories and strange and terrible vicissitudes of its past, or of the important rôle it still plays in history. Built, like Rome, on seven hills, it does not yield, in the eyes of half of Europe at least, to that imperial city itself in the grandeur and sadness of its associations, or in the beauty and sacredness of its monumental remains. Venice does not present aspects more unique, bizarre, and magnificent to the lover of the picturesque. Paris has not witnessed more tragic scenes of unmuzzled human passion and high-strung heroism, of national glory and humiliation. Moscow is a picture of Russian history and the Russian character limned in timber and in stone. It is the true growth of the soil,

the highest development, so far, of the national genius; for St. Petersburg—a mere European city, an imitation of modern Paris—is no more to be compared with it in historical interest and suggestive individuality of type than it is in antiquity. The first glimpse of “Holy Mother Moscow of the White Walls” surprises, delights, and puzzles the visitor, however much he has familiarized himself beforehand with the tale of its marvels and its charms.

Looking down upon Moscow from the belfry of one of its hundred towers, or from its flanking hills, we seem to gaze on a scene that is half in the dreamland of fable, and half founded on a solid base of gross earth—on a city that has been the joint product of the labours of Eastern afreets and unlettered rustics. Broad and long, like the realms of the Great White Czar, the wilderness of roofs stretches out below you, with wide blanks here and there between the masses of building that speak of space and loneliness in the midst of a teeming population.

No order or plan can be traced in the arrangement of the crooked streets and lanes, and of the broad squares, crescents, and places; and no standard of taste with which we are familiar has regulated the proportion and the form of the buildings. Bewildering contrasts of colour, fantastic combinations of all styles—Asiatic and European, old and new, barbaric and civilized—everywhere meet the eye. The sun blazes on the gilded crosses, balls, vanes, and crescents, the silver-tipped minarets, and the domes—green, azure, and vermillion, or spangled with stars—of four hundred Christian churches, many of which might easily be mistaken



for Mohammedan mosques. Fortress, temple, and triumphal arch; campanile, steeple, and cupola; grim palaces of boyards of the old regime; gloomy convent walls; Greek porticos of seminaries, theatres, and literary and scientific institutions, and light and airy edifices for the treatment of disease or the succour of the orphan or the aged poor, are mingled together, as if with set purpose to bring out the wonderful diversity between ancient and modern canons of taste and modes of living. The green painted metal roofs of the houses, the orchards of fruit-trees, the avenues of lime, maple, and elm, the grassy slopes and green lawns offer a grateful relief to the eye that ranges over this city of palaces, hovels, and gardens. Through the midst of the buildings flows the Moskva, bearing barges loaded with farm produce or manufactured wares, crossed by handsome bridges, and overhung by the walls and towers and sloping banks of turf and greenery of the famous Kremlin.

If we descend into the streets, and thread our way through the busy, winding thoroughfares, the impression made by the general view of the city is deepened rather than removed. The contrasts of types and ideas is visible in the people as well as in the houses, though it is true that the progress of "modern improvement" is every day stealing from Moscow some feature that marked its half Oriental individuality. Riches and poverty live "cheek by jowl." The cottage of the humble citizen is next door to the spacious mansion of the noble. The lowly wooden booth of the small trader stands between the glaring front of the Orthodox church, surmounted by its towering belfry, and the imposing residence of some great city merchant. The endeavour to

discern plan and symmetry in the direction and connection of the streets is more difficult even than when viewed from above. You may roam by the half-hour through crooked lanes and humble thoroughfares, that look as if they had been removed bodily from some small and decaying country town, and suddenly emerge on a broad avenue or handsome boulevard, thronged with a well-dressed crowd, and lined with fashionable shops that would be an ornament to any capital in Europe.

The city has been rebuilt since the great "burning" of 1812. The materials are new, but the old lines have been followed and the old types generally perpetuated; a proof of the strong conservatism that is so striking a feature in the character of the people of Moscow. But though at first sight there is no more sign of method in the arrangement of its streets than is shown in the threads of a spider's web, a closer examination reveals, if not a plan, at least indications of a process of growth.

Like a tree, it shows its age by the concentric rings that surround its core—the Kremlin. Close under the eastern walls of the citadel is grouped the Kitai-gorod, the "Chinese City," as some translate it, while others derive the name from that of the natal town of the mother of Ivan the Terrible, in Podolia. This is the mart and place of business of Moscow, and is filled with shops, warehouses, stores, and offices, besides containing the Great Bazaar, where the riches of Asia are exchanged for the products of Western countries. Forming an envelope around the Palace of the ancient Czars and the Kitai-gorod, but not crossing to the right bank of the river, is the Bielo-gorod, or "White City," the part of the town chiefly affected by the older families of Moscow,

and where are situated many of the modern public buildings, such as the Town Hall, the University, the Mint, and the great Riding-school, where, under a roof five hundred and sixty feet in length by one hundred and fifty-eight feet in breadth, unsupported by pillar or prop of any kind, the troops of the Emperor may be exercised and reviewed during rain or deep snow. Beyond the "White City" is an inner line of boulevards, marking the old city boundary; and an outer line, surrounding the Kremlin at a distance of a mile and a half from that centre, encloses the Zemlianoi-gorod, or "Earthen City," so called from the earthen bulwarks with which it was defended. In this part of the city are many of the more fashionable streets and squares, and also many of the most squalid and poverty-stricken localities. Outside of all these, but within the modern line of fortifications, which are no less than twenty-five miles in circuit, are the "suburbs," where there are still great unbuilt-on spaces, occupied by gardens, parade-grounds, parks, and ponds.

If Moscow is the crown of Russia, then the Kremlin is the crown of Moscow. What scenes it has witnessed since the site of the "Church of the Redeemer in the Wood"—the most central of the group of palaces and cathedrals—was part of the primeval forest! What torrents of blood have flowed here since Prince George Dolguruky, coveting the land, slew the owner, and stuck his spear in the grassy bluff above the Moskva in sign of possession! Here the political power that had fled from Kiev, and had found temporary refuge first at Suzdal and then at Vladimir, was at length established in a suitable stronghold, where it could maintain itself and grow in strength for many centuries. Here the

kindred plants of autocratic and sacerdotal authority throve and twined themselves together, sending their united roots deep down into the natures of a superstitious and conservative people; and a Tartarized court and a priesthood saturated with Byzantine ideas became the moulders of the destinies of one of the most powerful races in Europe.

The walls of the Kremlin are two miles in circuit, and the space enclosed within them is triangular in shape, and bounded on its three sides by the Moskva, the Bielo-gorod, and the Kitai-gorod. Seen from the river, or from any point of vantage within the city or in its outskirts, the high, white, crenellated walls, the tall and massive palace fronts, the clustering domes and spires of the cathedrals, monasteries, nunneries, arsenals, treasuries, senate-houses, and patriarchal residences that are crowded together on this spot, make a brave and majestic show.

From the "White City" the Kremlin is separated by tastefully laid out shrubberies and walks, and from the Kitai-gorod by the wide space of the "Red Place." It is here that the principal entrances to the citadel are found, most notable of all being the "Holy Gate" of Our Saviour of Smolensk, over which is the miracle-working image to which all that enter, from the humblest peasant to the highest in the land—the Czar himself—must do obeisance. Other celebrated portals are those of St. Nicolas of Mojiask, before which oaths were taken in former times; and the Gate of the Trinity, built, like the tower over the Saviour Gate, by a Scotchman named Galloway, in the pay of the Czar Michael Romanoff.

Strange tales these walls might tell, if they could speak, of the scenes they witnessed while Russian history was being written in blood and flame at their feet. A score of times the invader battered at these gates; and often he gained an entrance, but always to retire at last worsted by the patience and devotion of the faithful Moscovites. In 1233 and 1293 the city was sacked by the Golden Horde; three times towards the close of the fourteenth century it was assailed by Olgerd and the Lithuanians; in 1381 it was captured and laid waste by Tokhtamish, the lieutenant of Tamerlane; in 1571, Devlet Ghirei, Khan of Crim Tartary, seized and burned it nearly to the ground; in the "Time of Troubles" that followed the extinction of Ivan the Terrible's family it was held alternately by Zaporogian and Don Cossacks, Tartars, and Poles; and between 1682 and 1698 it witnessed the sanguinary insurrections and massacres of the "Streltsi," or national guards.

Often the guardians of the Kremlin gates watched armed men fighting in every street, or the whole city wrapped in flames that licked the topmost pinnacle of its towers, melted the lead from the roofs of the most sacred churches, and brought the consecrated bells and blazing rafters crashing to the pavement. In the conflagration that followed the incursion of the Nogai Tartars, no fewer than one hundred thousand of the citizens are said to have lost their lives. Terrible pestilences have visited Moscow in the train of fire, war, and civil commotion; and during a visit of the plague last century thousands of the people knelt day and night in the Red Place before the holy image on the

principal gate, praying in agony that the pest might be removed from their homes.

Scenes of triumph and peace as well as of horror have been enacted here. The *vetché* bell of Novgorod and the insignia of the Grand Princes of Kiev have been conveyed hither, as was, at a much later date, the throne of the Polish kings. Solemn counsel and rude wassail were held within by the old Grand Princes amid their boyards and *okolnitches*; and through the gateway of the Kremlin, Sophia Palæologus, daughter of the Emperor of the East, entered to become the wife of Ivan the Great, bringing with her foreign tastes for arts and refinement, artists, architects, and musicians, and the germs of a renaissance in Russia such as had already been transplanted from the East to Italy and France. Ivan the Terrible bore through it the spoils of the conquered khanates of the Volga, and, with the aid of his Italian artificers, erected in front of the Holy Gate the famous Church of St. Basil the Blessed, in memory of the overthrow of Kazan.

The triumphs of Peter the Great and Catherine II. have been celebrated here; but the supreme crisis of Moscow's fate, the saddest and most glorious hour in her "eventful history, was when the "grand army" under Napoleon, cresting the "Sparrow Hills" to the west of the city, came in sight of its leagues of glittering spires, and filed in through the Nicolas Gate into the citadel of the Czars. It is a poor heart that can read without a thrill of conflicting sympathy and pity the story of how, in October 1812, the citizens of Moscow set fire with their own hands to their holy and beautiful city, the pride of many generations, thus offering, as has been said, the

grandest sacrifice ever laid on the altar of patriotism ; and how the discomfited invaders, after blowing up part of the buildings of the Kremlin, were compelled to abandon the prize that had brought them so far only to turn to ashes in their grasp, and begin that terrible retreat in the dead of winter which so few of them were to survive.

The central shape that lifts itself above the group on the Kremlin is the Tower of Ivan Veliki—"John the Great"—built, however, not by that aggressive prince, but by the Czar Boris Godunoff, the chosen of the boyards when the line of Ruric failed. Boris has left many monuments ; for though termed a "usurper," and though he fastened the yoke of serfage on the necks of the people, he was a great patron of art. None of his works, however, is so imposing as this. The tower, measured to the top of the cross, is three hundred and twenty-five feet in height, and from the uppermost of its five stories a magnificent view is obtained of the city.

A great chime of bells, the largest weighing sixty-four tons, is suspended in the tower ; and when at midnight on Easter-eve these monsters "give tongue," mingling their deep voices with the fainter sounds of the innumerable other bells of Moscow and with the deafening roar of the batteries of artillery, and when all the population of the city seem gathered in the "Great Place" below, bearing lighted tapers in their hands, it needs an effort on the part of the spectator to realize that he is actually living in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and that the people around him are not, as Mr. Wallace almost fancied them to be, a gathering of the ancient citizens "called out to repel a Tartar horde

thundering at their gates." The Russian people have a passion for bells, but the most unwieldy product of this national taste is the "Czar Kolokol"—the Czar of Bells—whose damaged form rests on a pedestal of stone at the foot of the Tower of Ivan Veliki. It is said to have been tolled at the birth of Peter the Great; but for nearly two hundred years past it has rested on the ground, with a piece weighing eleven tons broken out of its side. The total weight of the bell is no less than four hundred and forty-four thousand pounds—about two hundred tons—and its height is upwards of nineteen feet.

To the west of Ivan Veliki, and between it and the ancient Palace of the Czars, are the most famous of the ecclesiastical buildings in the Kremlin enclosure,—the Cathedral of the Assumption, where the Emperors of Russia are crowned, and where are the tombs of the sainted metropolitans of Moscow; the Cathedral of Michael the Archangel, where are the last resting-places of the line of Czars down to Peter the Great; the Cathedral of the Annunciation, with its floor paved with agates and other precious stones, and in which the former rulers of Russia were baptized and married; the Church of the Redeemer, the first Christian church in Moscow, and where repose the ashes of Stephen of Perm, the earliest Russian martyr; and the Sacristy, or Meeting-place of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church, an immense building, wherein are preserved, amid other curiosities and treasures, the robes, ornaments, and relics of the old patriarchs, and the "sacred oil," transmitted from Constantinople by the first Christian missionaries, with which the Emperors are anointed.



It is on the occasion of this ceremony of coronation that Moscow regains for a little time the semblance of its old self. At other times, the halls of the ancient and modern palaces on the Kremlin are silent, except to the tread of the sentinel or the sight-seer. For weeks and months beforehand the city has been on the tiptoe of expectation, and the loyal ardour of the people has been at fever heat. Civil and military officials, deputies, ecclesiastics, troops, visitors from every part of the empire, have gathered thither to witness or take part in the fêtes and religious exercises that are conducted with the utmost splendour and solemnity, and with a punctilious regard to the minutest detail of the old established forms.

First, the uncrowned Czar comes to take up his quarters at the Petrovsky Palace, a large Gothic structure outside the city, in the direction of St. Petersburg. After three days comes the entry in state into Moscow. The city dignitaries meet their Emperor at the Tverskaia Gate; the military authorities of the Kremlin receive him at the Holy Portal, where he doffs his hat reverently to the sacred figure that guards it; the senate await him in front of the Cathedral of the Assumption, and the members of the Holy Synod, with the Metropolitan, salute him within the porch. He makes the round of the tombs of the old Czars in the Church of the Archangel; and then, ascending the steps of the Red Staircase leading to the palace of his ancestors, he turns round upon the terrace at the top to show the people "the light of his eyes." It was down these steps that the "false Dimitri," Gregory Otrepief, a monk of the Miracle Monastery at the Holy Gate, who simulated the

## THE IMPERIAL PALACE.

murdered son of Ivan the Terrible, after being lifted into the throne by the wave of popular favour, was flung by the boyards, and stabbed to death in the court below. The insurgent Streltsi, in the troublous early years of Peter the Great, entered the palace by this way, and cut to pieces the great minister Matvief, and other relatives and friends of the young Czar, before the eyes of his mother; and by the Red Staircase also Napoleon and his generals formally entered the imperial residence. Within is the Gold Court, where was anciently the audience chamber of the Czars, and where many a turbulent and bloody scene has been enacted, as when Ivan the Terrible transfixing with his iron staff the foot of the messenger sent to him by his old general Kurbski, after the latter had taken refuge with the Poles.

Such reminiscences as these, however, are out of place on an occasion like the coronation of the Emperor of All the Russias; and we pass with the stately procession to the portion of the palace facing the Moskva, and which, like the Gold Court and the great halls of the orders of St. Andrew and St. Alexander Nevski, and the picture gallery connected with them, has been renovated or entirely rebuilt by the Emperors Paul and Nicolas.

In the Great Palace fronting the river—a stately and lofty structure, in the composition of which a great many diverse styles are oddly mingled—the Emperor resides while the indispensable preliminaries to the coronation—the military reviews, the proclamations in the Red Place, and at market and city gates, the vigils and fasts at the holy shrines of the patriarchs—are duly

gone through, and the regalia of Russia—the orb, the sceptre, the imperial robes of purple, and the great and little crowns—are removed in state by the grandees of the realm from the Palace of Facets. This last is the only portion of the old pile that has survived the ravages of fire and time. Below are the banqueting hall and the throne, and the upper chambers formed the "Terem," where the females of the imperial family were formerly immured.

In these darkling vaulted rooms did many generations of Czarinas and elderly spinsters of the blood-royal pass their days in more than Oriental seclusion. In the imperial family the old Russian ideal of woman's domestic virtues and position—an ideal derived not from the Mohammedan conquerors, but from Byzantine sources—could be carried out to the letter. Down to the days of Peter, it was treason even for high officers of state to see the wife or the daughters of the Czar. If a medical man were called in to prescribe for one of the ladies, the windows were darkened, and he had to feel the pulse of his patient through a covering of gauze. No subject was thought good enough to espouse a daughter of the Lord of Muscovy, and ignorance and prejudice were still barriers strong enough to keep out all foreign suitors. So these high-born princesses pined and soured and shrivelled in loneliness; filling up the hours by religious exercises, and such small intrigues and jealousies as will naturally arise among a score or so of women of any rank who are cooped up together with nothing better to do; and scandal said that they occasionally solaced themselves with vodka, and even found means, in spite of the guards set over them, of receiving visits from their lovers.

It was Peter's mother — Natalie Naryskin, wife of the Czar Alexis—who first, to the horror of the sticklers for old customs, drew aside the corner of her carriage curtains when she appeared in public; and it was Peter himself who opened the prison doors to these forlorn captives and let in the light of day upon the Terem, savagely shaving the head, knouting, banishing to a nunnery, and finally divorcing his wife Eudoxia because she clung stubbornly to the conservative notions of the imperial family life. The Grand Dukes and Czars had a singular and thoroughly Eastern method of choosing a mistress of the Terem, and when it was thought right that the "father" of the people should marry, the pick of the maidens in the empire were sent to Moscow, and from among these, after preparation such as Esther had to undergo before being admitted into the presence of Ahasuerus, and careful comparison, the royal choice was made. Peter, though he chose as his second mate the Livonian peasant girl who was crowned in the Kremlin as Catherine I., definitely laid aside this archaic practice—which was surely more honoured in the breach than in the observance—and the Empresses of Russia have since been chosen from the princely and royal families of Germany.

This reminds us, however, that their imperial highnesses are waiting in the Palace of Paul I. for the coronation ceremony. Moving in grand procession, accompanied by the insignia of state, and with the eyes of all Moscow fixed upon them, the actors in this imposing pageant descend again the Red Staircase and enter the Cathedral of the Assumption. The Emperor and Empress walk under a canopy supported by thirty-two general officers.

The "royal doors" are passed, and the High Priest and King of Holy Russia is within the most sacred of Moscow's fanes. For once the Church of the Assumption has thrown off its air of shadowy mystery and gloom, and the pictures, images, and icons of patriarch, saint, and evangelist gleam in the light of a thousand tapers. Small as this building is in size and grotesque in decoration and arrangements, it is perhaps the most interesting church in Russia, and is the central spot round which Russian religious feeling revolves. "So fraught is it with recollections," says Dean Stanley, "so teeming with worshippers, so bursting with tombs and pictures from the pavement to the cupola, that its smallness of space is forgotten in the fulness of its contents." And M. Rambaud, describing its normal appearance, says: "One can hardly believe that the Assumption is of the same date as the luminous churches of the renaissance. The architect"—the Italian Fioraventi—"or those who inspired him, has here tried to reproduce the mysterious obscurity of the old temples of Egypt and the East. The cathedral has no windows, but only close-barred shot-holes, which admit into the interior a doubtful light, like that which filters through the hole of a dungeon. This pale glow touches the massive pillars covered with a tawny gold; on the tarnished background stand out, severe and grave, the faces of the saints and doctors; it dwells here and there on the relief of the golden *iconostase* (altar-screen), covered by miraculous images, sprinkled with diamonds and jewels; it hardly lights the representation of the 'Last Judgment' and the 'End of the World' painted on the walls. All the upper part of the temple is partly enveloped in

shadow, like the crypts of the Pharaohs; the pictures which cover the vault can hardly be distinguished. The artist has evidently made them for the eye of God, not for that of man."

In the centre of the nave, facing the high altar, a platform is placed, on which are set the two thrones of Ivan the Great and Michael Romanoff, and on these the Emperor and Empress solemnly take their seats. Then his majesty, having made his public "confession of faith," invests himself with the robe of purple and other symbols of royalty, and, as the sole fountain of power and authority in the realm, places the crown upon his own head. At the same moment the great bell in the Tower of Ivan Veliki rolls out his ponderous notes, which are responded to by the four hundred lesser chimes of Moscow, the roar of the cannon, the cheering of the populace, and chanting of the cathedral choir, all announcing, by a deafening and impressive volume of sound, that the Autocrat of the Russias, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Finland, has formally assumed to himself the duties of the lord and father of his people. At the foot of the altar the Emperor is anointed with the "holy oil," and the procession having returned to the palace, the solemn ceremonies of the day end with the coronation banquet in the great banqueting hall, where the Czar sits enthroned, apart, clad in his imperial robes and adorned with sceptre and orb, while his nobles feast around him.

Behind the central masses of buildings—the palaces, cathedrals, senate houses, and courts of law—and stretching along the side of the enclosure adjoining the Bielogorod, are the Treasury and Arsenal of the Kremlin. The

former is a vast museum of the treasures of gold, silver, and precious stones, and the objects of historical and antiquarian interest, gathered here by the monarchs of Russia from time immemorial. Nowhere, perhaps, can such a collection of "barbaric pearl and gold" be seen. Thrones, crowns, and coronation robes, crusted with rubies, diamonds, and sapphires; drinking-cups, caskets, candelabra, ewers, and flagons of massive silver; jewellers' and goldsmiths' work of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, military standards and trophies of war, old armour and weapons; horse-trappings and antique carriages; relics of dead Czars and Czarinas, and mementoes of glorious or disastrous events of Russian history, are arranged in a long suite of apartments, through which the visitor might roam for days and still find that he had barely seen the moiety of the rich and curious objects they contain. Some of these one would have fancied the head of the state would have preferred to have hidden from public sight as too suggestive of the dark stains of Russian dynastic history and the evanescence of royal splendours—such, for instance, as the murderous "staff" of Ivan the Terrible, and the boots with which Peter the Great kicked many a refractory noble.

In the Sacristy is a similar collection of ecclesiastical relics of great antiquity and rarity, comprising mitres, rosaries, mantyases, omophorions, sakkos, and other episcopal vestments, crosses, reliquaries, panagias, images, icons, church plate, croziers, and the rest of the sacerdotal paraphernalia, many of them of great value and elaborate workmanship, the gifts of pious Czars, boyards, or commoners to the Church or its dead patriarchs and bishops.

The most notable object in the neighbourhood of the Arsenal is the Tzar-Pushka—the monster or “Czar” cannon—cast in the reign of Feodore, brother and predecessor of Peter the Great, and which weighs nearly forty tons. Along the walls are arranged the ordnance captured by the Russians in war, many of them pieces taken from the French during the retreat from Moscow.

But we have already lingered too long within the enclosure of the Kremlin, though we have only peeped into the interior of one or two of its thirty churches, and barely glanced at the associations, sad and terrible, glorious and revolting, with which its palaces are thronged. It is time to pass out again from the deserted halls of the Czars into the din of the city; and emerging into the Red Place, an object strikes the eye that is fitted to dazzle and stun the most phlegmatic of sightseers.

The Cathedral of Vassili Blajennoi (“St. Basil the Beatified”) lifts up its whimsical shape and flaunts its gorgeous plumage almost in front of the Holy Gate. Travellers, historians, and archæologists have cudgelled their brains to find something wherewith to liken this amazing edifice. Théophile Gautier describes it as a church surmounted by six or eight round cupolas, all of different heights and forms, “some beaten into facets, others cut; these carved into diamond points, like the ananas, those in spirals; others again, marked with scales, lozenge-shaped, or celled like a honeycomb.” From its topmost turret to the pavement, Vassili Blajennoi is daubed with glaring and crude colours; in plan and decoration it is more like the insane dream of the architect of the peacock throne of Ava than a sober Christian sanctuary. Rambaud figures it as “the most



brilliant bird of tropical forests that had suddenly taken the shape of a cathedral ;” and Haxthausen compares it to “an immense dragon with shining scales, crouching and sleeping.”

The architect was an Italian artist, well acquainted with the grand, grave, and simple church edifices of his own land ; but we seem to see more here of the distorted and fanatical character of its founder, Ivan the Terrible, and of the crude and barbarous tastes of Tartarized Russia, than of any foreign genius. It was built in commemoration of the conquest of Kazan, above the bones of an idiot saint and miracle-worker, whose shrine is shown within ; and so pleased was Ivan with the work that, as tradition says, he rewarded the architect by putting out his eyes, “in order that he might never build another like it.”

Another noticeable object in the Red Place is the “Lobnoe Mesto,” or tribune of stone, supposed to have originally been a place of execution, and from whence the Czars harangued the people, and the Metropolitans blessed the Muscovite armies ere they marched out to war. In front of it took place a scene of blood, in which a Czar—Peter the Great—wielded the axe of the headsman,—the wholesale execution of the Streltsi, that put a final end to that body and their dangerous uprisings and intrigues. Finally, in the Red Place, and facing the Kremlin wall, is the national monument to the boyard Pojarsky and the peasant - butcher Minin, whose patriotism saved Russia in the terrible “time of troubles” that followed the extinction of the old line of Czars, the appearances of the “false Dimitris,” and the invasion of the Poles, and led the way to the establishment of a new royal race in

the person of the child Michael Romanoff, the descendant of a family of Prussian immigrants. The old Romanoff House, where Anastasia, wife of Ivan the Terrible, was nurtured, where her nephew, the Patriarch Philarete, lived, and his son, the Czar Michael, was born, is shown in one of the neighbouring streets in the Kitai-gorod; and the curious may still see there the arrangements and furnishings of an ancient boyard household.

The other sights of Moscow we must pass over quickly, though many of them are of great interest:—for instance, the chapel dedicated to the Iberian Mother of God, the miraculous picture in which is to this day carried periodically through the city to heal the sick and bring blessings; the Church of Our Lady of Georgia, erected in commemoration of the first Russian annexations beyond the Caucasus; the Temple of Our Saviour, an immense structure near the stone bridge over the Moskva, begun in 1812, to celebrate the repulse of the French, and never likely to be finished, as it has been found that its foundations have been laid on a bog; the Suwaroff Tower, erected by Peter the Great, and often the scene of his orgies with his foreign favourites, and now used as a reservoir of the city water supply; the Red Gate, a grand triumphal arch erected by Peter on his return from the Azov expedition, by which Russian territory was first made to touch the basin of the Black Sea; the Empress's Palace on the Smolensk road; the University, the Public Library, and museums, etc. Neither must we forget that peculiarly Muscovite institution, the Foundling Hospital, where every year twelve thousand infants who have been abandoned by their mothers are admitted and nurtured at an annual cost to the state of some £20,000.

Many monastic institutions are scattered round the suburbs of the city, and in former times they often served it as outer fortifications against the inroads of Tartar and Pole. Celebrated among these is the Sunon-off Monastery, founded five centuries ago by the famous St. Sergius of Troitsa, who here blessed Prince Dimitri before he set out to overthrow the Golden Horde on the banks of the Don. From the top of the belfry (three hundred and thirty feet high) of this monastery, which stands on the most elevated site near Moscow, a magnificent sight can be had of the city and its surroundings. In the Novo Deviche Monastery, close to the Moskva, Boris Godunoff took refuge in the "troubles," and was hence called by the boyards to reign for a time over Russia; and it was here that the Regent-Princess Sophia was compelled to retire when her strong-willed brother Peter was old enough to seize the power from her ambitious hands.

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But better worth study than any of the ancient monuments or modern sights of Moscow are the citizens of the old capital. They entertain many strangers. Visitors come from enormous distances and settle down in their midst; and few places present such opportunities of studying the costume, physiognomy, and manners of Asian and European races as the Great Bazaar at Moscow. The Tartar element in the population is considerable; and there is a strong body of German artisans and merchants, with a sprinkling of many other nationalities. But the people of each race dwell as a rule apart, and form little coteries among themselves.

The true Moscovite does not care to mingle with them except in the places of trade. He is proud and not a little

jealous of the honour of being a citizen of Holy Moscow and a subject of the White Czar ; and he does not consider that any stranger or pilgrim that is within the city's gates is worthy of that high distinction. Even the merchant prince of Moscow is ultra-national in political sentiment, and ultra-orthodox in religion. You find him, perhaps, polished and courtly in manner ; shrewd, well-informed, and intelligent in business ; a charming and entertaining companion, well read not only in Russian books but in the literature of other countries ; and a lover of hospitality, which he dispenses with overpowering lavishness. He has a pronounced taste for good cheer, music, and jollity ; probably also for art and science ; and seems to be a man who away from business heartily enjoys existence without taking too grave and deep a view of its duties and burdens.

On a surface view, you might easily mistake him, apart from the clumsy and archaic cut of his winter raiment and the amplitude of his beard, for a favourable specimen of his class as it is found in Western countries. You little suspect how thin often is the crust of modern fashion, and how deep the abyss of obsolete ideas and beliefs that is yawning beneath. He has secretly armed himself with a triple mail of prejudices—prejudices of race, of nationality, and of religion—before trusting himself into the paths of progress ; and guarded by this ancient armour he is safe from any influence that might harm the Russian spirit within. A little friction is enough frequently to reveal most unexpected forms of medieval enthusiasm and fanaticism ; and you are puzzled to tell whether the cultured gentleman who can discuss with you the merits of Wagner's music, or the theories of

Darwin, is not, after all, a "survival" of the Middle Ages. To the typical Moscovite the Emperor is still the "divine figure," ruling by an unquestionable right that it would be sacrilege to deny or oppose. With the same blind fervour he cherishes the national faith, and patriotism and religion have become so bound together in his belief that they are inseparable. It is his boast that the great "heart" of Russia throbs within the walls of his ancient city, and that all truly national movements have their beginning there. As the latest and not least important instance, the agitation that preceded the Russo-Turkish War had its first and most significant displays in Moscow.

If the Moscovite has obsolete faults, it must also be admitted that he has some obsolete virtues. Of hospitality, as has been said, he is a royal dispenser. Within his means nothing is too good to be set before his guest; and there is an old-fashioned heartiness and earnestness in his welcome which is rarely met with in these days, when travelling is universal and hotels ubiquitous. When you can penetrate to his heart of hearts, too, the citizen of Moscow is said to prove a stanch friend, who sticks to you through good and evil report and all vicissitudes of fortune.

But changes are at work even in the ancient capital of the Czars. The ferment of new ideas has worked into the very centre of old Muscovy. Russia is full of vague aspirations and hopes, half-formed and impracticable theories of social and political perfection, and of the restless, excited, uneasy feeling that precedes the time when "the old order changes, giving place to new." The bonds of the 'loyalty to the Czar, and to the creed introduced by Cyril and Methodius, seem to be partially

unloosed even in Moscow. Whatever may be the progress of Nihilism and other monstrosities of modern Russian thought, however, it will be long before the visitor who looks about him in Moscow with an understanding eye will fail to discover, still burning brightly in the hearts of the townsfolk, that spirit that led them, when the invader was at their gates, to burn their beautiful city to the ground to save their native land.

## CHAPTER VII.

### HISTORIC SITES IN GREAT RUSSIA.



IN the neighbourhood of Moscow are many interesting historical sites and pretty bits of scenery—pretty at least for Russia, which is not too richly endowed with the beautiful in landscape. Along the banks of the Moskva especially, both above and below the city, there are numerous pleasing views of wood and water, cultivated land and handsome country seats ; and the fleets of barges, boats, and rafts that ply on the stream add animation to the scene without detracting from its pictorial effect. But the two spots in the vicinity of the city that are, perhaps, best worth a visit are associated, not with the industrial enterprise of the old capital, but with the ecclesiastical and religious life of the country, which in every age of Russian history has been intimately mixed up with all the important affairs of state, and with the daily existence of the humblest peasant. One of these is the Voskresenski, or Resurrection Monastery, better known as the “New Jerusalem,” situated about twenty-five miles from Moscow, on the main route to St. Petersburg.

Its founder, the famous Nikon, Patriarch of Moscow, sleeps here, after a busy and stormy life, which had,

perhaps, more influence on the development of the Russo-Greek Church than had that of any of her other children. In the midst of the patriarch's labours for the reform of the ritual and correction of the canonical and liturgical books of the Church, and of his struggles to retain that predominating political power which the patriarchs had obtained under the first Romanoffs, Nikon found time to build on the Istra, a little tributary of the Moskva, a model or exact counterpart of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem, copying not merely its shape and dimensions, but the smallest details of its construction and ornamentation, so far as they could be ascertained in his day, and working at the building with his own hands like a common mason. The Istra was rebaptized the Jordan, and a tributary brook the Kedron; a village in the vicinity was named Nazareth; and a chapel marking the spot where the Czar Alexis I. stood at the consecration of the church in 1657, Eleon.

Nikon pushed his pretensions to temporal power too far, and was disgraced and banished to a monastery on the White Lake, in a remote corner of the province of Novgorod. Later he was pardoned, but died before he could resume his schemes of aggrandizement and reform; and his tomb is now shown in the Chapel of Melchizedek, at the foot of "Golgotha," in the monastery which he raised. His reforming zeal also was too ardent, in the view of many of the Russians of his day, lay and cleric. The changes that he introduced in the ancient usages of the Church—especially in "crossing" with three fingers instead of two, the reading of *Iēsous* (Jesus) with two syllables in place of three, the repetition of the *Hallelujah* thrice instead of twice in the service, and the



substitution of a cross with two transverse beams where formerly there were three—produced deep and terrible schisms in the Russian Church, which are still unhealed.

These schismatics (*raskolniks*) are not to be confounded with the heretical sects that have also arisen in the bosom of Greek Orthodoxy. Their contention is that they are more orthodox than the Orthodox Church, and alone preserve pure and undefiled from modern corruptions the ancient faith of their fathers. With these Old Believers (*Starovertsi*) the shaving of the beard is still regarded as a mortal sin, and the Czar himself, as following in the footsteps of that arch-fiend and reformer Peter the Great, is looked upon as little better than Antichrist. An extreme type of the *Starovertsi*—real Old Seceders—are the “Priestless People,” the *Bezpopostschins*, who despise the concession made by their less stanch brethren in accepting priests ordained by established bishops.

The cruelties and persecutions to which the reforming zeal of Alexis and Peter subjected these unhappy schismatics only made them more fanatical and extreme in their resistance. Torture, fine, and imprisonment were imposed as a penalty for wearing a beard; and the leaders of Russian nonconformity were hunted down, knouted, or burned alive. Under these circumstances, the *raskolniks* fled with their faithful prophets and priests to the woods and solitudes, and there founded new communities and spread abroad the Russian race. Villages of them we will meet with in the depths of the forests of the Dwina and Petchora and by the shores of the Arctic Sea, on the southern steppes, in obscure nooks of the Urals, or in remote corners of Siberia. More extreme

varieties there are of Russian schism and heresy—Philipists, Fugitives, Wrestlers with the Spirit, Milk-Drinkers, Scoptsi, and the like—whose eccentricities of practice and belief would take more time to describe than we can spare.

Still more noteworthy than the New Jerusalem Monastery is that of Troitsa, the shrine of the holy St. Sergius, the altar on which was kindled the first flame of Russian patriotism in the dark days of Mongol domination; the bulwark of the nation against usurping pretenders and Polish and Tartar invaders; the refuge of the young Czars Peter and John, when the turbulent Streltsi of Moscow, like the Prætorian bands of Rome, threatened to take the fate of the empire into their keeping; and the quiet retreat where Dionysius, Politzin, Platon, and other learned and pious men, studied and laboured, laying the foundations of a national literature and culture.

The “Trinity” Monastery, or, to give it the full title, the “Crown of Saint Sergius, under the Invocation of the Holy Trinity,” is situated about forty miles from Moscow—a mere stone-throw in Russia—near the line of railway leading north-eastward to Jaroslav on the Volga. It is ranked next in sanctity after the Petschersk Monastery at Kiev, which it far exceeds in richness and historical importance: in these respects, indeed, it has few rivals even beyond the bounds of Russia. Many other monastic establishments, however, are its seniors in age; for it was only in 1337 that the pious Sergius, removing with a few disciples from the abodes of men, built for himself here, in the heart of the forest, near a little stream flowing into the Kliasma, a cell and a small church of wood: and devotees, hearing

of his sanctity, the miraculous cures he wrought, and the beatific visions of the Virgin and holy apostles that were granted to him, began to gather round the lowly hermitage.

A spectacle far different is Troitsa at the present day. It stands on a high situation, overlooking its domain of plain and forest and populous villages for many miles. Walls varying from twenty to fifty feet in height, and three-quarters of a mile in circuit, protected by fosses and flanked by massive and handsome Gothic towers, surround it. Within the convent enclosure are ten churches, with numerous chapels and refectories, an imperial and an archiepiscopal palace, hospital, libraries, a seminary for students, handsome ranges of apartments for the archimandrite, rectors, prefects, and other monastic functionaries, with extensive storehouses, kitchens, and other offices, all solidly built of hewn stone.

The most celebrated church is the Cathedral of the Trinity, within which is the shrine of St. Sergius, weighing nearly one thousand pounds in pure silver. Massive images and ornaments of silver and of gold, adorned with precious stones, surround the shrine, or are grouped in other parts of the church. Here Dimitri Donskoi was blessed and consecrated for the "holy war" against the Tartars; and the convent sent forth along with him two redoubtable champions from among its alumni, who contributed much to the oft-mentioned victory of the Don. Ivan the Terrible, who has left so many grim and fantastic impressions of his sign-manual on the page of Russian history, was baptized in the Trinity Church, and often returned hither with gifts and honours in his hands; for he was a religious fanatic

as well as a man of "blood and iron," and in all his campaigns, even when under the ban of the Church for his crimes, he carried about with him a small chapel consecrated to St. Sergius. The "soul" of Russia may be said to have transported itself to Troitsa when the Poles occupied Moscow. The monastery was besieged for four months, but it was gallantly defended; and then, as on all subsequent occasions, it proved impregnable to a foreign foe. It was through the invocations and reproaches of Dionysius and Politzin that the Russian lords and commons, under Pojarsky and Minin, were stirred up to cast out the invader and choose for themselves a new national head. Under the high altar the young Peter the Great lay hidden when the insurgent Streltsi attacked the place.

The Church of the Assumption, within which are the tombs of the Czar Boris Godunoff, and of Dionysius, the precursor of the Patriarch Nikon in the Russian Church reformation, is also an immense and interesting building; and in its great belfry, rising to a height of nearly three hundred feet, are hung probably the largest chime of bells in the world. The most ponderous of the bells weighs nearly sixty-five tons, and one of the others is nearly half that weight.

The treasures of Troitsa in jewels, plate, sacred relics, church robes and paraphernalia, paintings, sculptures, and ancient books and manuscripts, are scarcely less rich and varied than those of the Kremlin itself, and many of them are the gifts of emperors, empresses, and great nobles. The monastery is said to possess two bushels of pearls, to which Mr. Lansdell would add "an estimated pint of diamonds, to say

nothing of emeralds, rubies, and sapphires innumerable." In palmier days than the present, ere the Empress Catherine II. curtailed its revenues, the monastery had no fewer than one hundred and six thousand serfs attached to it, and its territorial possessions were of prodigious extent. Even yet it is a wealthy and powerful institution; and its rich revenues and broad lands, its high walls binding as in a sheaf its tall spires and towers, its cupolas of gilded copper covering its treasures of gold, silver, and pearl, its memories of miracle and siege, of martyrdom and pageant, make it, perhaps, the most remarkable of the many strange manifestations of the religious feelings of the Russians.

The Troitsa Monastery is on the highway to an interesting part of Muscovy. The valley of the Kliasma, at the head of which it stands, was the centre of Russian history long before Moscow began to be heard of, and the country between that stream and the Volga is scattered over with the remains of renowned cities. Commerce has found for itself more convenient channels. Moscow has drained them of their fame and importance; and now Rostov and Suzdal, Pereslav and Vladimir, are left high and dry, deserted by the crowds of traders that once frequented their streets, and seldom visited even by the wandering tourist.

Rostov, the oldest of these venerable cities, is one whose modern estate is among the most reduced and forlorn. It was a town of the Merians, a Finnish tribe of repute in the days before the Norsemen came to Novgorod to trouble the nations. Sineous, the brother of Ruric, who settled on the White Lake far to the northward, extended his sway over Rostov. No doubt there

were bloody and obstinate battles before the Finns gave way to the Slavs and their Varangian leaders, but the record of these is lost. But Rostov was the first appanage of the Slavs in the Volga countries, and tribute was paid to it by the Emperors of the East early in the tenth century. It was here that Christianity was first preached in these regions, the earliest bishop being a Greek missionary from Byzantium; and in 990 Vladimir the Saint founded at Rostov the Abraham Monastery, which still exists, and granted the surrounding territory to his son, the canonized Boris. It was, however, after the days of Vladimir Monomachus—grandson of Constantine Monomachus, Emperor of the East, father of George the Long-armed, and a famous figure in Russian history, whose cap of fur, surmounted by gems, the cicerone will show you in the Kremlin of Moscow as the oldest of the imperial “crowns”—that Rostov became a separate principality. Then it took its share in the fighting that was constantly going on; was sometimes uppermost, and then again undermost; had its share of sieges and sacks by Tartars, Lithuanians, and brigands; and gradually waning before the rising splendour of Suzdal, Vladimir, and Moscow, fell into insignificance.

Rostov has still a score of churches ancient and modern, a great annual fair, some transport trade, linen and chemical manufactories, and gardens scattered around the little lake, that supply fruits and vegetables for the tables of Moscow and St. Petersburg. Otherwise there is little in the flat marshy plain to attract pilgrims thither. Even its name has been filched from it; and now when Rostov is mentioned, one does not think of the ancient Finnish stronghold, the birth-place of the Christianity of the

Volga, with magnificent churches covering the sacred bones of holy and quarrelsome saints, and the seat for centuries of pious and greedy princes, but of Rostov the vulgar new sea-port town on the Sea of Azov.

Suzdal, which succeeded Rostov in the supremacy of the North-east, is not far off. Its Grand Dukes once exercised for long a really royal sway, extending occasionally over Kiev and Novgorod; but to-day it has dwindled to even smaller dimensions than Rostov. George Dolguruky,—Long-armed George, as his grasping proclivities well entitled him to be called,—was the first independent prince of Suzdal. From here he went forth on his many excursions north, south, east, and west—plundering and humbling Kiev, as we have seen, and carrying off the grand-ducal crown of his father Monomachus from the sunny plains of the Ukraine to these sombre forests; founding Moscow, Pereslav - Zaleski, Jaroslav, Kostroma, Vladimir, and other important cities. It is still worth while to trace the old earthen ramparts and ditches that divided the city into three parts, and glance into the interior of its vast old churches that are the only remains of its former grandeur. In the Assumption Cathedral, in the Kremlin of Suzdal, may be read an inscription that tells how Vladimir came hither in 997 to convert the people and to found this church; and the traveller who has sufficient faith may believe the authenticity of the record.

Vladimir, which is only a stage or two to the south, on the banks of the Kliasma, was probably selected by the later Grand Dukes in preference to their first heritage, both for its more convenient position and its more imposing site. It is now on a main line of railway half

way from Moscow to Nishni-Novgorod, and it is the chief town of the government of the same name, and the seat of an archbishopric. Nevertheless it also has fallen from its former greatness; Moscow and Nishni-Novgorod have between them drained it of trade and influence. For one hundred and seventy years it was the capital of Russia. Even after the seat of sovereignty had been transferred to Moscow in 1328, the Grand Princes up till 1432 came to the Cathedral of Vladimir to be crowned.

The palaces, churches, and humble wooden shanties of old Vladimir spread for a great distance along the hilly banks of the Kliasma; and the Convent of Bogolubof, now seven miles distant, is said to have been once within the walls. Here, as at Moscow, there are a "Bielo-gorod," a "Kitai-gorod," and a "Kremlin;" but the population musters in all only fifteen thousand. Like its successful rival on the Moskva, Vladimir has often been burned down, sometimes by accident, and oftener by the hand of man. The most terrible day in its annals is its capture by Baty Khan in 1238. The Grand Prince George III., founder of Nishni-Novgorod, was absent at the time gathering an army to repel the invaders. The city was captured after four days' fighting, and the inhabitants put to the sword. The princess, with her children, and the clergy and nobles of the place, shut themselves up in the Cathedral of the Assumption; and the Mongols, piling wood around the edifice, burned it to ashes with all its occupants. Catherine II. restored the church in 1774, and later monarchs of Russia have often paid marks of respect to this ancient seat of their race. The Cathedral of St. Dimitri of Solun (partly restored by the Emperor Nicolas) is another



antiquity of Vladimir, and, with its golden gate, is considered one of the finest specimens of the Byzantine style of architecture in Russia.

The prosperity of modern Vladimir mainly depends on its position as a provincial capital. Another famous city, the seat of the neighbouring government of Jaroslav, has preserved its importance by reason of being situated on the main artery of trade. Jaroslav is one of the busiest ports of shipment and transshipment, storage and distribution, of the multifarious commerce of the Volga and its connecting canals; has a rapidly growing population, counting already forty thousand; and has important manufactures of linen, wool, table drapery, hardware, leather, gloves, furs, paper, and chemicals; extensive saw-mills, foundries, and tanneries; and great annual fairs, which help to spread the products of the city's industry over the whole empire. But the townspeople are perhaps prouder of the past distinction of the place than of its present prosperity. Its annals carry us back to the days of the Grand Prince Jaroslav, son of Vladimir the Sainted.

The reader must be tired of hearing the reiterated story of civil broils and Tartar sacks, of which Jaroslav had its share like its neighbours. The great event of its history occurred in the early part of the seventeenth century. It was in this region that the first note of patriotic passion was sounded that was to deliver Russia from the Poles, and the wolfish bands of robbers that were tearing it asunder as if it were a dead carcass. Uglitch, in the same province, some distance farther up the Volga, was the place where occurred the murder of the young Dimitri, the most tragic event

in its effects in Russian history, whereby the last hope of the line of the old Czars was extinguished. Uglitch also yielded the first contingent of Siberian exiles. The usurping Godunoff, having quelled the insurrection that followed on his crime, transported many of the citizens beyond the Urals; and having publicly flogged and broken off the ears of the great town bell that called them to arms, he formally exiled it to Tobolsk, where it still rings church-goers to prayers.

The patriotic Russians of the North-east—after long witnessing their fatherland a prey to Crimean and Cossack hordes, usurpers, pretenders, and brigands, and even "Holy Mother Moscow" herself in the hands of the heretical troops of King Sigismund of Poland—assembled at Jaroslav and Kostroma, and having chosen Prince Dimitri Pojarsky as their leader, marched on to Nishni-Novgorod, followed and cheered for long distances by the populations of whole districts. Then, having been joined by the heroic Minin and the volunteers of Nishni, they pursued their way to Moscow, where the task of clearing the capital of intruders being completed, the assembled nation chose for its head the young Michael Romanoff, scion of a noble family whose estates lay not far from Kostroma.

Among the most promising signs of the present of Jaroslav may be mentioned the Science College, founded and endowed by one of the Demidoffs, that great family of bankers and merchants who have been called the "Rothschilds of Russia." More characteristic of its past are its fourscore churches; perhaps the most interesting being that of the Nativity, where, in Peter the Great's time, St. Demetrius, a great clerical champion of reforms,

sustained arguments and superintended persecutions against sectaries.

Without entering either into the church or into the controversy, we will move down the broad, traffic-laden stream to Kostroma, also the chief town of a Russian government, and with a history and modern occupations that agree pretty generally with those of Jaroslav. If we glance into its curious old Cathedral of the Assumption, we may see the spot where Dimitri of the Don kneeled to give thanks for his safety when the Tartars were wasting Moscow; or if we walk out to the neighbouring Monastery of Ipatief, the rooms may be examined where the six-year-old Michael Romanoff was living with his mother when the representatives of the boyards and people came to offer him the crown of Russia. A monument in a prominent place in the town is in memory of the peasant Ivan Sussanin, whose romantic story has been embalmed in music, drama, and fiction, as furnishing the most heroic type of Russian loyalty. The Poles were in search of the newly-elected monarch. Sussanin offered to conduct an armed band of them to the place where he was concealed, and purposely leading them astray in the dark woods around Kostroma, he died by their hands—thus giving his “life for the Czar,” and helping to end the sorrowful “time of troubles.”

This busy region is indeed the consecrated ground of Russian patriotism; and thus we find, when we descend yet another stage to Nishni-Novgorod, the spectacles of modern industry, and the memories of the period subsequent to the Interregnum, completely blotting out the recollections of the confused old barbaric times ere Muscovy began to struggle out of its isolation.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### NISHNI-NOVGOROD—RUSSIAN INDUSTRY AND TOWN LIFE.



ANY to whom other Russian names that have been mentioned have been strange, must be familiar with that of Nishni and its great fair, where the East and the West meet once a year to chaffer and to exchange. A guide-book—Murray's excellent publication, for instance—will inform those who consult it that everything interesting about this far-famed commercial city "may be seen in a day;" and though this may be taking an exaggerated view of the tourist's capacity for sight-seeing and powers of endurance, it is the fact that the Great Fair is no longer the extraordinary spectacle that it once was.

That there is any falling away in the actual amount of business done is unlikely. The trade of Nishni is vast and increasing. Its situation, high on the right bank of the Volga, just below its junction with the Oka, is unrivalled as the site of an inland emporium. Not only do all the main channels of river communication—the Volga, the Oka, the Sura, and the Kama—feed it, but the chief routes of traffic and travel to and from Siberia converge upon it. Russian colonization is pressing on and rapidly filling up the country to the

eastward and northward; and in all probability Nishni is only in one of the early stages of its commercial development.

But the old system of conducting trade, especially since the introduction of railways, is undergoing change. Occidental methods are taking the place of those that have been in vogue in Eastern countries from the most remote antiquity. Business can be much more expeditiously and efficiently done by sample and by letter than by buyers and sellers assembling from all quarters of the earth with their goods in their hands. Consequently, though the quantity of commodities exposed may be smaller than in former times, the actual amount of traffic conducted is immensely larger. The smaller centres of trade growing up in Siberia and Turkestan now collect and transmit the produce of these countries; and so strange visitors from Asia, with outlandish faces and garments, and forming a Babel of unknown tongues, no longer form so prominent a feature of the fair as they formerly did. In the arrangements of the fair itself many innovations have been introduced, causing the disappearance of some of the most characteristic and singular of its sights. Picturesqueness has been sacrificed in the interests of cleanliness, and alterations and additions have been made in conformity with modern notions of comfort.

In spite of these changes, the view, seen from one of the elevated spots in the city—the Tower of Minin, for instance—is still an animated and remarkable one in the high-tide of the great annual gathering. Far and wide, meeting the horizon in a line only broken by a mass of forest, a steep river bank, an undulating heave of the

land, or a glittering church spire, stretches the broad plain, mostly under cultivation, and indicating, by the number of hamlets and large villages scattered over it, a population dense for Russia. The broad band of blue stretching across the landscape from north-west to south-east is the noble Volga, and the narrower ribbon that meets it at right angles at your feet is the Oka. Both rivers are crowded with barges, sailing vessels, and steamers ascending and descending. A thick forest of masts stands opposite the wharves of Nishni, and extends far into the Volga. On the triangular space between the two streams are long streets of booths, dingy or brightly painted, with boulevards, lines of restaurants, and places of amusement, and avenues of trees line the river; the new bazaar and governor's residence in the centre; and a swarming population, like bees, moving to and fro in this "city of shops"—the fair itself.

To the southward of this scene is the town of Nishni itself, with the sun gleaming from its brazen cupolas and the white-washed towers of its kremlin, and throwing deep shadows under the low archways and the battlemented walls where the Tartars of Kazan have often fought for entrance. At the present day the Tartars of Nishni are a very useful and peaceable folk. You will see their lithe, active figures busily engaged in the lading and unlading of goods, with the sweat of honest toil on their foreheads; and you are certain, while wending your way to the fair, to be civilly and insinuatingly accosted by one of them who has some little venture of his own strapped on his back or spread out before him.

Arrived on the scene of business, you may direct your steps to the centre of the mart, where, in the lower floor of the governor's house, are displayed manufactured English goods, fancy articles from Paris, toys of Nürnberg, and relics from Palestine, side by side with Persian and Bokharan silks and brocades, jewel-hilted knives and daggers from the Caucasus, ornaments of jade and lapis lazuli from Kashgar, turquoise, malachite, and other stones, spurious and real, cut and uncut, with Russian goods of all varieties. You may thence make your way by a boulevard, lined principally by the shops of silver and gold smiths, and dealers in fur and drapery goods, and in which stand in kindly company the Armenian and Orthodox churches and the Mohammedan mosque, to the "Chinese row" behind, where the principal article exposed is the brick tea imported from the northern parts of the Flowery Kingdom, by way of Kiakhta, and choicest samples of which are sold<sup>a</sup> at "fancy" prices that would make a British housewife stare. The Russians are excessively fond of tea; but contrary to our method, they drink it without milk, and flavoured with lemon-juice, sucking the fragrant beverage through a piece of lump-sugar held between their teeth.

The Siberian line, which skirts the Volga, is no less worth a visit; for here, along with the products of the great Asiatic territory of Russia—furs and grain, and precious metals and stones—may be seen the miscellaneous stores designed for the Russian colonies and penal and military posts scattered through Siberia as far as the Pacific. Another important department of the fair is that devoted to the sale and purchase of the dried fish which forms

so important an article of Russian diet. It has been an immemorial usage in the houses of the richest in the land, and down through every rank almost to the lowest, to whet the appetite by some tit-bit before the principal meals; and relishes suitable to all classes are purveyed at Nishni-Novgorod—caviare for the aristocratic, and salted cod or the coarser kinds of river fish for the vulgar palate. Or if you drop into one of the numerous restaurants—of which there are specimens suited to the tastes of the different races and classes that frequent the fair—you may profitably spend half an hour in watching the manner in which the people of various nations consume their food. Fill the warehouses, the bazaar, the eating-houses, the khans, the mosques and churches, the streets, the wharves and the shipping with a throng of from one hundred and fifty thousand to two hundred thousand strangers from all quarters, added to the ordinary resident population of forty thousand, not forgetting to make a prominent feature of the throngs of dirty beggars and tramps, greasy and tattered pilgrims and slouching monks, all equally eager to profit by the generosity of the well-to-do, the ignorant, and the pious, and you may gather some idea of the aspect of Nishni in the time of the fair. Other two fairs are held—one on the ice of the Volga, in January, for articles chiefly of wooden manufacture and toys; and the other in July, for horses and cattle—but neither can compare in extent with the great gathering in September.

In the town itself there is a good deal to attract notice. The citizens have not forgotten to honour the patriot who was born in their midst, and in addition to Minin's Tower, the tomb of the gallant butcher and



chief magistrate of Nishni, who cast out the Poles from the Kremlin of Moscow, is pointed to with much pride and reverence in the Cathedral of the Transfiguration, the most ancient of the city churches. Within the kremlin of Nishni also is a monument, erected by the Emperor Alexander I., to Minin and Pojarsky, whose names are as closely and constantly associated in patriotic legend as those of Boris and Gleb are in ecclesiastical myth.

Murom, the famous Russ city which was the headquarters of the last-named sacred personage, may be reached in a day's journey up the Oka, on the right bank of which, and within the province of Vladimir, the decayed old town lies. Chroniclers carry back its history as far as that of Rostov, the capital of Boris; and like that ancient town its population has dwindled in modern times to some ten thousand or twelve thousand. The walls of its kremlin have disappeared, but it is rich in churches, in sacred relics, and in pilgrim shrines; and what in secular eyes is of greater consequence, it still boasts a not inconsiderable trade in grain, flax, linseed, iron manufactures, and timber. Murom is likely to grow in importance, for it stands in a favourable position between the fertile corn-growing lands south of the Oka and the more northern provinces that are less richly endowed with agricultural wealth. Its mills grind much of the rye meal and flour that feed the industrious artisans, wood-cutters, and fishermen of the five great Russian governments through which we have just glanced—Moscow, Vladimir, Jaroslav, Kostroma, and Nishni-Novgorod.

These provinces are, for the most part, within the zone of pine-forests, which, broadly speaking, the Oka divides from the oak-woods and deep black mould of the districts farther south. They contain vast tracts of fertile country, but a much larger extent of marsh land, forest, and unprofitable sand and heath. On the whole, they do not raise sufficient grain to support the population—some six and a half million, scattered over nearly one hundred thousand square miles. Their true wealth lies in their fine forests of timber trees, their prolific fisheries, their centres of manufacture and commercial business, and, most of all, in the industry and enterprise of their inhabitants. Nowhere, even among the wandering Slavs, is the instinct of roaming more strong, or the practice more common, than in these old provinces in the inmost heart of Russia.

A waggoner or boatman of Vladimir, or a felt-worker of Kostroma, will travel across the Urals as far as the Yenisei, or perhaps even the Lena, and think himself richly compensated if he bring back a few kopeks in his pocket. Troops of young artisans—masons, carpenters, plasterers, blacksmiths, and shoemakers—emigrate from their homes on the Volga to the large centres of population, to St. Petersburg, to Riga, and to Odessa, for the purpose of practising their craft and saving a little money, with which they will return to their native village, purchase a house and a share of the communal lands, and settle down to peasant life. Thousands lead a half-peasant, half-artisan life, performing their share of the labour of village lands in the proper season, and working at their trade for the rest of the year.

The nation is self-sufficing—that is, it strives, and by the aid of prohibitive tariffs strives pretty successfully, to shut out foreign competition, and to manufacture all that it needs for its daily wants. Thus while Russia exports enormous quantities of grain and other raw produce to its customers in other lands, it imports a comparatively small quantity of their commodities in exchange, and a great proportion of these imports consists of articles of luxury demanded by the “educated” tastes of the rich. It loses no doubt more than it gains by this policy; but to supply so enormous a population as is comprised within the limits of the empire, demands an extensive production on Russian soil of all that a Russian requires for food, raiment, travel, and labour. Economically, so far as its own needs are concerned, Russia is a “world apart,” a kind of Japanese Empire in process of slow transition from the operation of irresistible external and internal causes. Many of the manufactured goods may, perhaps, as little bear comparison in finish and quality with the products of British looms and workshops as Tula, the “Russian Birmingham,” and Vyska, the “Russian Sheffield,” can vie with the great English centres of trade; but they quite suit the home market, and meet all the simple requirements of the peasant purchaser. The employers of capital in Russia have as yet been able to lie a good deal on their oars and take things easy; and so there may still be seen in many parts of the country the mines, factories, and mills emptying as the season of seed-time or harvest approaches, and the work-people streaming home by river-boat or post-cart, or more often on their own sturdy legs, to look after their

little holdings, scores or perhaps hundreds of miles away.

It is in this "Russia of the forests" that we have been describing also that another peculiar feature of Russian industrial life is most marked and frequent—namely, the occurrence of villages, or groups of villages, devoted to a particular branch of trade. Each village, each district, and each province has some special occupation, to which often its people are exclusively devoted.

Thus Count Artamof tells us, in his work on Russia, that if the district of Nerehta, in Kostroma, is celebrated for its axes, Chuiysk is not less noted for its calicoes and its nankins, and its women are regarded as the best spinners in the empire. The cutting and transport of firewood, and the preparation of tar and carbon, occupy the natives of Pochehonn in Jaroslav; and the people of Lubimetz are keepers of restaurants and cheap eating-houses. The province of Jaroslav, indeed, supplies the waiters of the lower class to the large towns of the empire; while the Tartars of Kasimov on the Oka, famous for their sobriety and honesty, are employed in the best hotels of Moscow and St. Petersburg. The district of Miychino furnishes excellent saddlers, harness-makers, and potters; and Rybinsk is known for its pilots, joiners, and carpenters. Horsebreakers come mostly from the banks of the Mologa; and no place in Russia can compete with Uglitch for hams, or with Romanov for sheepskin coats. The market-gardeners of Rostov, as has already been mentioned, carry their onions and cabbages, their cherries and apples, etc., to the old and new capitals of Russia; and those of Danilov are close competitors with their fruits and vegetables.

No housewife is satisfied unless her board is spread with linen from the looms of Velikoi-Selo or Viskovo.

Mr. Mackenzie Wallace informs us that "in the province of Vladimir a large group of villages live by icon-painting; in one locality, near Nishni, nineteen villages are occupied in the manufacture of axes. Round about Paulovo, in the same province, eighty villages produce nothing but cutlery; and in a locality named Ouloma, on the borders of Tver, no less than two hundred villages live by nail-making."

South of the Oka river, between it and the country of the Don Cossacks, and extending from the basin of the Dnieper on the west to the banks of the Volga on the east, is a "huge cantle" of Russia, comprehending no fewer than ten governments—Kaluga, Orel, Tula, Riazan, Tambov, Kursk, Voronej, Penza, Simbirsk, and Saratov—that present numerous points of contrast, becoming more marked as we move southward and eastward, to the countries we have just passed over.

Shifting away from the centre of the empire, the historic mould becomes more shallow; we can skim the surface at greater speed. Ancient cities with chronicles reaching back to the days of the introduction of Christianity, and even towns that can carry their history back to the more recent times of the Grand Princes or the domination of the Golden Horde, become more rare. Some towns of old date, may be pointed to. Riazan and Kaluga, Elefs, Kursk, and Voronej were Russian settlements before the coming of Baty Khan; Tula and Orel played important parts in the civil struggles at the close of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries.

But Penza and Simbirsk, Tambov and Saratov, and the vast majority of the other centres of population, are the creations of the times of the Romanoffs, many of them, indeed, of the last fifty years. These provinces are lands recovered from the flood of Tartar immigration. Their settlement belongs to the more recent period of Russ colonization; and the process is not by any means complete.

Along the eastern skirts of this immense region—which is nearly as large in area as France, and with a population of between fourteen and fifteen millions of souls—the inhabitants are still scantily sprinkled, and there is ample room for development. Bran-new towns are springing up, much as we find them doing in Minnesota or Kansas, in districts teeming with agricultural riches, and whose great disadvantages are the fewness of the hands for turning the furrow and reaping the crop, and the great distances that separate them from a market. Even in the provinces nearer to Moscow and Kiev, though the country is often more densely populated than in the oldest parts of the empire, the land is capable of supporting a much larger number of inhabitants than it does at present; for this is the “granary of Russia”—a store-house from whose abundance a great part of Europe and of Russia itself is fed. The conditions of soil, climate, exposure, and products differ in each of these provinces, as may easily be imagined, from the great extent of surface that they cover. But they resemble each other in this, that their population is almost exclusively devoted to agricultural work, and that they raise a large quantity of grain and other farm produce in excess of their own wants.

In the northern parts of Riazan and Tula there are still masses of pine forest and bare expanses of swamp and sand; farther south, fine woods of oak, maple, beech, and elm, with wide clearings between, are prominent features of the landscape. Beyond these, the woods dwindle down to copses, or straggle away into lines bordering the river-courses. A rich, smiling, open country, with little hills and ridges tufted with trees planted round the walls of some convent or country-house, with hollows full of white hazels and wild cherry, apple, and pear trees, and broad cultivated plains, and cheerful-looking, white-washed village houses clustered round the church—such are characteristic features of the fertile “Black Lands” of Orel, Tambov, and Penza, and of Kursk and Voronej, bordering on the pastoral steppes of the Ukraine and the Don Cossack country. By the margin of the Volga, in Saratov and Simbirsk, wide, bare, sandy plains alternate with fine forests, deep, rich, loam lands, bearing splendid crops of wheat and maize, or patches where the painstaking German colonists rear the tobacco plant, the vine, and the water-melon.

We meet with a great variety in the races and religions as well as in the scenery of this region, and these increase the nearer we approach the Volga. Of the Finnish tribe of the Mordvins there are three hundred thousand established in the provinces of Penza, Saratov, and Simbirsk; and the last-named province contains nearly one hundred thousand of the cognate people, the Tchuvashes. Side by side with these are Tartars, forming little communities apart, each with its mollah and its village mosque. The Finnish peoples, nominally Christians, still follow many of the sacrificial and other

religious practices of their pagan ancestry, offering horses, horned cattle, sheep, and fowls to their tutelary deities, and propitiating them with oblations of bread, beer, and vodka, and assembling in "sacred places" in the woods for these superstitious observances, of which the ecclesiastical authorities know not, or knowing, wink at.

Then the Teutonic colonies remain, as has already been noted, as German in tongue, manners, and religion to-day as they were when their countrywoman the great Empress Catherine planted them on the Volga to be light to the Russian peasantry around them. The Russians have learned nothing; and their Lutheran neighbours have forgot nothing.

But the great cause of ecclesiastical strife and heart-burning in these countries is not the alien creeds of these alien peoples, but dissent in the bosom of the Orthodox Church itself. To the mind of the ordinary moujik, it appears the most natural thing in the world that the Finlander should be a Protestant, the Pole a Roman Catholic, and the Tartar a zealous follower of Mohammed; but it is to him a thing incomprehensible that one of his own race should be of a faith different from that of his fathers and all his kin. His religion is as much a matter of inheritance as his blood and his name, and it would be a kind of sacrilege to doubt and blasphemy to deny the faith handed down from the fathers.

But, as is inevitable among a peasantry on whom religious feelings, uncorrected by knowledge and reflection, have so powerful a hold; who have intense, unbounded faith in the miraculous virtues of penances, pilgrimages, fasting, the touch of holy relics, and



consecrated bread; who pay a devotion to the outward form not less profound than to the spirit, and whose memories are stored with the superstitious beliefs of their ancestors in malignant spectres, fairy people, and mysterious beings of the wood and the marsh,—there are within the Russo-Greek Church divisions and subdivisions of doctrine and observance innumerable. Like the stars, these seem to “increase with gazing.” Some of them reach back to the earliest discussions in the Christian Church; others, including the most important of all—the sect of the Old Believers, of whom we have spoken—to the times of official reform and persecution inaugurated by the Patriarch Nikon and the Czar Alexis; while some of the most strange and extreme forms are the product of modern religious and political impulses. It is said, though no official statistics can be got to bear out a fact so unpleasant, that if a religious census of Penza, Tambov, and the neighbouring provinces were taken, there would be found to be at least as many Old Believers, clinging to the ancient forms and tenets, and abhorring innovation as the special work of the Evil One, as members of the recognized Church.

A great part of this region south of the Oka formed part of the old principality of Riazan, the last and most formidable of the rivals of Moscow in the basin of the Volga. The Princes of Riazan contended with the Lords of the city on the Moskva for the favours of the Great Khan, and fought with them in the field. Tula belonged to them, and their territory extended to the neighbourhood of the Dnieper on the west; while Voronej, far down the Don valley, was one of their possessions. It was not till 1521, in the time of Vassili, son of the

“Great,” and father of the “Terrible” Ivan, that this magnificent land, whose rich harvests “looked like waving forests,” was added to the possessions of the Grand Dukes of Muscovy. The last Russ republic, Pskov, had fallen ten years earlier; and Novgorod Severski, the last princely appanage, fell two years later, and thenceforth, as M. Rambaud says, “there was only one Russia” who could now turn her united arms against her foreign enemies the Tartars and the Poles.

The town of Riazan itself is on the south bank of the Oka, some distance above Murom (to which it was originally subject), and about one hundred and twenty miles from Moscow. The old city of the same name was obliterated during a Tartar incursion, and its remains are to be seen thirty miles from the present Riazan. The latter was first known as Pereslav-Riazanski, a contemporary town with Pereslav-Zalieski, in Vladimir, and both named after the still more ancient Pereiaslav on the Dnieper near Kiev. The two little streams that fall into the Oka here are the Lybed and the Trubej, so called by the original emigrants after the brooks that flow through the old Pereiaslav, just as Anglo-Saxon colonists bestowed the familiar names of the old country on their new homes—as, for example, you will find a “London, on the Thames, County Middlesex,” in Upper Canada.

Pereslav, on the Oka, rose to fortune on the ruins of Old Riazan, and appropriated its very name. Even the odour of sanctity that clung to the walls that the Tartars battered down has been transferred hither. The imperishable body of St. Basil, first bishop of Murom, made a miraculous voyage up the Oka on a

mantle, bearing in its arms a wonder-working image of the Virgin, and rested a while at Old Riazan. Then as the infidels would not leave the canonized corpse in peace, it continued its marvellous voyage up-stream; and bones and image now attract thousands of worshippers to the Cathedral of the Assumption in New Riazan, one of the vastest religious edifices in Russia. Great store of treasure and curiosities, including a cup, gilt with the gold signet of Baty Khan, the dust of warrior-princes and sainted bishops and laymen, armour and chalices, quaintly painted altar-screens and icons, enrich the interior of this and the other churches of Riazan. The episcopal palace was once the seat of the powerful sovereigns of the principality; and the old defences of the city and kremlin can still be traced. In the town and neighbourhood there are numerous monasteries of great extent and sanctity, as indeed we find to be the case wherever a few thousand Russians are gathered together; and like all the other provincial centres in this rich agricultural region, Riazan has its stated cattle fairs and important grain markets, the resort of throngs of sturdy, well-to-do peasantry from the surrounding district, and of corn-dealers, shippers, millers, distillers, hide and tallow merchants, horse-rearers, butchers, and others from distant quarters where nature has not been so lavish in her bounties.

Riazan's next neighbour, Tula, on the other hand, is more than any other town in Russia a place of manufacture. Its pre-eminence in this respect is not a thing of yesterday. For about three hundred years, since the epoch when iron ore was discovered in the neighbourhood, it has resounded with the clang of the hammer and

the whirl of the loom, and its people have been celebrated for their skill as gunsmiths and cutlers. Peter the Great brought artificers from Western Europe to teach the workmen of Tula the most improved methods of constructing gun barrels, locks, and flints, the casting of cannon, and the fabricating of swords and pikes. On his way back to Moscow, after his first unsuccessful expedition against Azov, Peter halted several days at Tula, and in the new ironworks, built by the Dane, Marselis, "amused himself by hammering three large iron sheets with his own hands,—every hammer blow," as Mr. Schuyler says in his *Life of the Great Czar*, "driving away a regret and fixing a resolution."

Ever since, it has been the armoury of Russia, and at the present day the great bulk of its population are engaged in the imperial arms factories and other establishments for the manufacture of rifles, hardware, and cutlery, while it is also noted for its production of samovars, the brazen apparatus for preparing tea which every Russian carries with him on a journey. A great impetus has been given to its trade in recent years by the discovery of coal deposits in the neighbourhood; and Tula, with its smoky stalks and ranges of many-windowed brick factories, looks more like a busy, grimy town transported from Yorkshire or Lancashire, than a stiff and starched provincial capital in Great Russia.

In the streets of modern Tula, where every sight and sound is an evidence of the sweat and struggle of industry, it is not easy to recall the times when the inhabitants crowded terror-stricken behind the ramparts at the rumour of the approach of devastating

hosts of Crim Tartars or Turks, or to believe that it was at one period infamous as a resort of lawless desperadoes. It was at Tula that Otrepief, the first and ablest "false Dimitri," gathered a following about him; and the city was for a time his capital, where he received ambassadors, and took possession of the royal robes and treasures brought from Moscow. Again and again the turbulent townsmen rose under new leaders, and the place was besieged, sacked, and burned by pretenders and usurpers, patriots and Poles, till at length, abandoning the old site, they began a career for their city on a new footing, having learned to some purpose the lesson that there was more profit in peaceful pursuits than in civil broils.

Kaluga is another town which has been compelled by misfortune to shift its site and its ways; but probably the visitor and the reader will not care to undergo the tedium of spending much time in hunting up the *souvenirs* of its past within the white-washed walls of its cathedrals and convents that overlook the lazy Oka, and will be content also with a flying glance at the small town of Malo-Jaroslavetz (Little Jaroslav) not far off, where the conqueror of Europe, the lawgiver to kings, the great captain of his age, drank the cup of humiliation to the dregs.

Napoleon, leaving Moscow smouldering behind him, and finding winter fast approaching, endeavoured first to gain Kaluga, whence the way would have been open for his army into a richer and more genial region, which had not been swept clear of supplies by the passage of two enormous armies. At Malo-Jaroslavetz he suffered the first defeat in the retreat; and perceiving, as

no eye could better do, the unassailable position of the Russians, he gave way to despair, and retiring, says Segur, to the cottage of a weaver, "an old, crazy, filthy wooden hut," and to a dirty dark room divided into two parts by a ragged cloth, the master of the Tuileries fell into a state of stupor from which none of his generals could rouse him. Next morning the army turned their backs on the bright gleam in the southern sky, and their faces towards Smolensk and the chill and surly north, and resumed their ever-memorable retreat.

Kursk and Voronej, outposts of yore against Tartar inroads, and to-day thriving towns, embosomed in orchards, the centre of busy agricultural operations, and predominating wide reaches of rich grassy steppe lands, might claim some notice. The former was the scene of heroic struggles between Polovtsis and Kievans, Cossacks and Nogais; and the latter the station where Peter the Great built his flotilla—"the first Russian fleet of war," if we except the model frigates the Czar had previously built and exercised on the lake of Pereslav-Zalieski—with which he wrested Azov from the Turks. Voronej is notable also as the birth-place of the peasant poet Nikitin, and other bards and leaders of the people, and as the designated seat of a "new Russian" university. But apart from these, few of the places we meet with in traversing the "Granary of Russia" possess any attractions beyond the very modest share of them common to the country towns of the Empire of the Czar.

Like other things constructed for use rather than show, these towns of Great Russia are eminently unpicturesque. A few wide, ill-paved streets at right

angles to each other, and united by a maze of narrow crooked lanes not paved at all; blinding dust in dry weather, and mire mid-leg deep after rain; at all seasons, except, perhaps, during keen frost, pervaded by "a rank compound of villanous smells," among which a discriminating nose might detect greater variety of evil odours than is attributed to Cologne; droves of cattle and horses from the Don country and the Ukraine, guarded by ragged Tartar and Cossack drivers; heavy-booted moujiks enveloped in greasy sheep-skin coats bringing in loads of grain, hay, roots, and vegetables for sale; spruce citizens, with their wives and daughters often fashionably or at least gaily dressed, stepping cautiously along the dilapidated pavement, and past the refuse of tanneries, distilleries, and tallow and soap works, profoundly unconscious that there is anything to offend the eye or nose or impair the pleasure of their afternoon promenade;—these delights may be promised to the enterprising traveller who undertakes the exploration of a typical Russian town. They are not of a kind fitted to stimulate the fancy; the novelty soon wears off. If you glance at the houses that line the principal streets, you may find not a few that have a striking and even handsome and tasteful appearance. The structure of even the loftiest church and most spacious town hall may be of timber; but white-wash and paint have been laid on with a liberal hand. Only in spots where the hot sun and the biting frost have combined to tear away its disguises will the humble material of the building be disclosed.

Where, following the fashion of the French, who in Russia at least are regarded as in the van of civil-

ization, trees are planted to form a boulevard, or orchards and gardens intervene between blocks of building, a bright and gay effect is produced by the contrast of vivid colours. These edifices, you will find, have been built with ambitious aims, and are of ample proportions. Few towns of any pretension are without their advanced seminaries for males and females, their military and ecclesiastical training schools, their library and museum, their literary and scientific assemblies, their musical and artistic coteries, often their small theatre and opera house. Too frequently, however, these admirable institutions have been provided to meet wants that have yet to be created. The gymnasia are sometimes almost as numerous as the scholars; the university is thought flourishing that can count half-a-dozen students for each member of its professorial staff.

Intelligent Russians complain that the fruits of these trees of knowledge are not so fair as had been expected—that the universities breed only pedants and revolutionaries. But that may be the fault, not of the knowledge taught, or even of the method of teaching it, but of the system that has set the machinery to work. The official mind deems it necessary that such and such a town should be supplied with the means of higher class education or of culture in art and science. In Russia the state lays upon itself the burden of taking the initiative in these matters. A paternal government acts and speaks and even thinks for its children, thus saving them a vast deal of trouble. All the opinions, political and religious, that are held to be safe are tied up in red tape, and laid away in pigeon-holes. There is no scope in wide Russia for individual thought, or for speech and action following upon it. All



whose views do not conform to the official model are held to be suspect and dangerous. It is not strange that the attempt to guide philosophy, art, and science on these hard and fast lines should have ended in failure, or in eccentricities that in the eyes of the originators of the system are worse than failures, and that Russia should be strewn with more wrecks of abortive schemes of modern improvement than with ruins caused by war and revolution.

As a rule, there is little original tendency towards culture in Russian urban society. The higher or official class—a military caste that will not deign to mingle with those beneath—are concerned with their own scandals, intrigues, and minute jealousies. Their spare hours are devoted to card-playing, in which an extraordinary amount of time is spent in Russia, to balls and evening parties, to church exercises if the cast of mind is religious, or to French novels if the taste is literary.

The merchant is wholly taken up with the affairs of his business and his guild. If he is rich, he gives magnificent entertainments, at which figure champagne, Dresden china, grand pianos, and costly foreign dishes, together with nobles, officers of rank, and artistic and literary celebrities, if these rarities are procurable. But his motive is ostentation, with perhaps a dash of that real desire to be hospitable which is seldom absent in a Russian; and as for the official guests, Mr. Mackenzie Wallace tells us that it is perfectly well understood that their presence implies no intimacy or invitation in return, and it is even hinted that a high military magnate will not disdain to accept a handsome present in return for the honour of his appearing as a "table decoration" at

the board of a rich merchant. But when the feast is over and the guests are gone, the host returns to his primitive old Russ mode of life, differing little, save in abundance and variety of his food and superior quality of his clothes, from that of his work-people and dependants. The luxuries and refinements of modern society afford him no pleasure or amusement; they serve only as a means of displaying his wealth and importance.

As for the ordinary artisans and burghers—the rank and file of the town population—most of them have hitherto found their time more than sufficiently taken up with the struggle to provide for their daily wants in food and raiment. The possibility of their having ideas and opinions of their own, of being capable of forming dangerous combinations and discussing the sources and the objects of national power, was hardly dreamed of by the bureaucracy which dictated the laws. Great political and economic movements—war, emancipation, the development of trade, the spread of education, the propagation of revolutionary ideas—have been long working like a strong ferment below the seemingly rigid forms of Russian society. If the government have failed to teach the people many things, they have thoroughly taught them the lesson to plot and to conceal. Socialist theories, under various disguises, especially that negation of all religious belief and denial of the individual right in property known as Nihilism, have spread, by some law of contraries, with amazing swiftness and secrecy through all ranks of a society heretofore distinguished for the blind intensity of its faith and its deep reverence for the traditions of the past.

The people are becoming infected by a suspicion that their temporal and spiritual guides have been misleading them—that their blood has been spilt, their hard-won money wrung from them, and their penances, prayers, and alms exacted, only to bind faster the bandages with which their masters seek to control their limbs and cover their eyes. The artisan class of the towns are always more exposed to outer influences than their brethren in the country, and these ideas have made most rapid progress among the work-people of the industrial centres. But no class of society seems free of the taint of disaffection. The army and the clergy, the nobles and the peasantry, the women more audaciously than the men, even officers of the imperial household and members of the body-guard of the Czar, have been shown, or at least have been suspected, to have taken part in the desperate and determined conspiracies against the life of the sovereign and the order of Russian society.

Under the whited surface painted by officialism, strange and secret processes—change and monitions of change—are going on which officialism itself cannot reveal, and the tendency of which the plotters themselves cannot estimate. It is no longer in the towns that we now look in vain for that immobile Russia of the Middle Ages that so long existed side by side with modern Europe. Even in the country villages, where the Russian life pure and simple may still be studied, we cannot be certain how far a society, apparently so dull and stolid on the surface, is mined and ready for a revolutionary explosion.

## CHAPTER IX.

### PEASANT LIFE IN GREAT RUSSIA.



TO find a village of the primitive Russian type—such as may be counted by the thousand within the limits of Great Russia, between the White Sea and the southern steppes, and from the old Lithuanian frontier to beyond the Ural Mountains—the best plan is to leave the beaten routes of travellers, where railways and steamers, and all the influences they bring in their wake, have modified patriarchal manners and disturbed the sleepy calm of the hamlet. It will even be necessary to abandon the lines of broad *chaussées*—some of them as fine specimens of road-making as are to be found in Europe—which have been constructed at great cost between the larger towns; and, getting as far away as possible from these beaten tracks, to plunge into the depths of the blank spaces, often as large as English counties, that, as shown in the maps, intervene between them. To reach your destination, it will be necessary to resort to means of conveyance peculiar to Russia, and to undergo the dire experiences of what in that realm is called a country road.

Having obtained your *podorojna*, or order for

horses,—nothing in Russia can be done without an official permit,—you will probably find at your disposal three or four instruments of torture: a *telega*, or springless cart; another cart, furnished with a hood, and called a *kibitka*; and a *tarantass*, a lighter vehicle mounted on poles, and furnished with the *donga*, or arched bow over the horses' heads, which figures so prominently in Russian equipages.

Few are carried so far by their curiosity as to explore these solitudes in the depth of winter; but by choosing that season, they will at least avoid the terrible ruts and holes and the unfathomable abysses of mud through which they must plunge and jolt when the track has been softened by rain. If the journey be long—and most journeys are long in the dominions of the Czar—changes of horses will be necessary, and provision has been made for this from time immemorial by the establishment of posting-stations along the route.

A sense of melancholy and loneliness is perhaps the feeling that is uppermost in the breast of the stranger as he approaches a secluded hamlet in Great Russia. These small rural communities have a character and an organization peculiar to themselves. Glancing along the single street, and peeping in at the rude doorways, you detect something of the temperament and the destinies of the people, and of the outward circumstances that have moulded their present condition. You look in vain for the fragile cottages of the Ukraine, with their shade of beech and cherry trees, their flower-plots, and their climbing vine, or honeysuckle by the porch.

The houses are solidly built of great rough-hewn logs, with roofs of scarcely less substantial structure, pitched

high in order to throw off the winter load of snow. On the doorway and windows little art has been expended; but, in the north especially, the end ridges of the roof, the rain-gutters, and balconies are often curiously painted, carved, and fretted. Instead of being scattered about in "admired disorder," like the huts of the peasants of Kiev or Poltava, where each house seeks to assert, by its attitude and situation, its individuality and its independence of the other, the dwellings in the villages of Great Russia stand as rigidly in line as their clumsy and loutish shapes will allow—like a Falstaffian regiment of Bullcalfs and Mouldys on parade. The houses, whether their number is ten or a hundred, are ranged on each side of the village street, and few of them straggle from the ranks. The thoroughfare itself is probably knee-deep in mire, and choked with filth unutterable, which it is no one's business to remove. It is the favourite wallowing-place of the pigs of the community and the playground of the village urchins. Poultry and lean mongrel curs are continually exploring it in search of garbage; and the feet of the cattle and horses, and the wheels of the rude waggons, stir up anew its unsavoury depths. The dwellings stand apart from each other, each with its own surroundings of cart-shed, byres, and other outhouses. The villager will, if possible, have his cabbage-plot, and in a favourable situation for fruit there will be orchards, but, as a rule, little or no space is spared for such useless and thriftless productions as flowers. While in Little Russia the eye may range over open and smiling sky and plain, in Great Russia, except in the extreme south, the forest is never far distant, and the heavens are

seldom long clear of cloud or of fog. On one side at least, and often on all four sides, the dark wall of the woods bounds the view, and seems to throw its shadow over the village life. From the first flurry of October snow until the hasty arrival of the belated spring six months of wintry weather may be counted upon. Often the storms are so heavy and prolonged that the village is buried to the eaves of the houses, or even deeper, under the snow, and cut off for a season from all intercourse with its neighbours.

But at the best of times, when the roads are hardest and harvests most plentiful, the influences of the world without have difficulty in penetrating into these secluded hamlets. The village elder, or some other representative of the commune perhaps, carries the surplus grain or other produce of the village lands to the great fair held in the nearest market town, and returns with a modest supply of foreign luxuries—the necessities of life are grown or woven at home—and with news of the court or the camp, of the latest miracle or victory; and then the village falls asleep again for a few weeks. They live a narrow and restricted life in the midst of almost illimitable spaces. The commune and its affairs are their universe; the village elder is their Great Power; the village council the repository of political wisdom, and the village pope or priest of spiritual grace. Czar and Metropolitan, Councils of State and Holy Synods, the tramp of armies and the march of modern progress, are things remote, undefined, incomprehensible—to be viewed with awe and accepted by faith, like other unseen mysteries, but, like these, incapable of being conceived by the simple peasant mind.

Such, until recently, has apparently been the mental attitude of the Russian villager; but even in his slow ears, as has been hinted, tidings of strange disturbing import have been whispered. He has heard—birds of the air have carried the matter—that he is far in the rear of the race, when he might be in the van; that the other nations claiming to be civilized have asserted and secured their rights; that the State has other duties towards him than to exact the communal taxes and sweep away a proportion of the village youth into the ranks of the army; that serf emancipation is but the prologue to other reforms; and that it is time to bear himself like a man and claim his just rights.

In the organization of the Russian village, there is something that prepares the mind for democratic if not for socialistic ideas. Each little rural community in Great Russia—the stronghold of autocracy and centralization—is in one sense an independent republic. When these lands were first settled, the immigrants had to camp, and clear the soil, in the midst of enemies. They clubbed together to cut down the forests and to defend their hearths and fields; co-operation was equally necessary to hunt down the bears and wolves, and clear away the snow-wreaths after the storms of winter. Men could not live apart in detached farms and crofts as in modern England; and the Russian is a social creature and pines for the presence of his fellows. The land itself was to be had for the occupying; the difficulty, until comparatively recent times, was to persuade or compel the peasant to reside on it.

And so arose the communal rights and authority,



established by indefeasible and unwritten law, under which twenty-five millions of Russian subjects hold their property. Each house in a village belongs to the head of the family occupying it. The land that the inmates till, however, is the property, not of themselves, but of the community of which the family forms a unit. It is periodically redistributed by lot, under the direction of the elder and the *mir*—the village council or "world," balloted for by the inhabitants "in public meeting assembled."

A member of the commune cannot free himself of his duties by neglecting them. He must work for the common good; and his laziness, waste, or intemperance is a public matter, which his *mir* takes care to look after. He cannot, without its consent, abandon his family and his lot in the little "world" and go out into the great world in search of fortune and freedom. Even if he is allowed to settle for a time as a trader or a workman in one of the large towns, he is often not relieved of the burden of his duties, and is even liable to be recalled and punished for real or trumped-up offences against the village commonwealth. For the *mir*, by immemorial usage, rather than by express written law, possesses extensive plenary powers over its subjects. It may eject them summarily from the community, and from all right in house and land, and turn them adrift into space; and it may, at least it does, punish them, not only by fine but by corporal chastisement. The representatives of a certain number of village communes—perhaps as many as a hundred—form the *volost*, or district authority; and the *zemstvo*, or provincial assembly, has been vested with new powers of local self-government and jurisdiction.

Emancipation, which has changed in so many ways the very foundations on which Russia's prosperity rests, has but strengthened and enlarged the communal system and extended its application into new fields. Not only was freedom given by a stroke of the pen to the bulk of the population of Great Russia, but the agricultural serfs were put in the way of becoming the communal owners of the lands they formerly tilled for the state and for the nobles; and from the house of bondage they were suddenly raised to the dignity, so much desired in some other lands, of being peasant-proprietors. As to the immediate effects of emancipation on the condition of the Russian peasants, and on the revenues of the Russian gentry, there are wide differences of opinion.

As might be expected from the great variety of soil, climate, and systems of agriculture, the benefits and the disadvantages of the change have been felt in very different proportions in different parts of the country. Thus in the provinces north of the Oka, where the climate is harsh and the soil so poor as hardly to repay the cultivator by means of "high-farming," emancipation has virtually only transferred the peasants from the rule of the nobles to that of the commune. The dues payable to their former lords and masters exceed often the rent value of the village lands; while the old proprietors themselves, deprived of part of their lands, and unable from want of labour to profitably work the rest, have abandoned their country seats and sought commercial pursuits or official employment in the towns.

In the "Black Earth" region, on the other hand, where

the climate is more genial, and the land fertile and capable of supporting a much larger population than at present, the serf-proprietors have generally benefited largely, even in pocket, by the social revolution from which some of them boded overwhelming ruin; while the peasantry are in a position that demands only industry and sobriety to make them comfortable if not affluent. In the one instance the possession of the land is felt to be a burden, and in the other it is a privilege; but under the best circumstances, the strict ties that bind the villagers within the limits of their petty world, and prevent them from seeking their fortunes elsewhere, or exercising their individual will in the smallest matter outside their own threshold, grow more and more galling. In the long run, the substitution of free for serf labour must prove a blessing to the country—indeed, for good or evil the change could scarcely have been longer delayed—and the late Emperor Alexander II. deserves great credit for the bold and energetic manner in which he grappled with, and so far solved, a vast problem.

Beyond the arable land adjoining the villages are to be found the pasturages where the cattle of the commune are turned out to feed; and probably the woodland and peat-moss to which each household resorts for fuel and building material. Most of the old enemies against whom the original settlers joined their forces—Tartar raiders, Cossack foragers, brigands, “broken men,” and all the loose conflicting elements of society in a state of disintegration—have passed away before the inexorable march of civilization and industry.

The wolves, however, remain, though in greatly reduced numbers. Packs of them haunt the forests, especially in

the more northern provinces; and after deep snow and long-protracted frosts, hunger emboldens them to prowl even into the village streets by night in search of prey. A belated wanderer, especially if he is old and feeble or fatigued by the march, would stand a poor chance of escaping their fangs; and in the more remote districts, even the traveller who has a couple or more of good horses harnessed to his sleigh may taste the dangerous excitement, made so familiar to us by tale and legend, of being pursued by the wolves. When the cattle and sheep have been safely housed, their fierce and wily enemy, coming "like a thief in the night," has been known to climb upon the top of the shed, scratch away the protecting snow, remove the covering of boards with his powerful teeth, and leaping down among the helpless beasts, destroy in one debauch of blood the unlucky peasant's whole stock. Then is the time for the outraged owner and his neighbours to turn out in force against the common foe. An ingenious method is sometimes adopted for making a large "bag" of wolves. A worn-out old horse is harnessed to a lumbering cart, that plods heavily through the snow, as if inviting an attack from the hungry prowlers that eye it from the shelter of the wood, and gradually draw nearer in the confident hope of obtaining an easy prey. But concealed in the cart are the best shots of the village, and when the pack gather together close at hand for their final rush, a volley into the midst of them sends them, scampering back to the thicket—all save the leaders, whom the keen eyes of the marksmen have singled out, and who are left dead on the track.

One of the great occasions of rejoicing in the

village—fasts and “name-days” or saints’ days are of weekly and at some seasons almost daily occurrence—is the marriage of a young couple belonging to the community. Marriage in Russia is a specially solemn sacrament and consecration, attended by minute and protracted religious observances, and visits of ceremony between the two families that are to be united. It is also a matter that personally affects the whole of the commune.

In former times numerous families dwelt under one roof, and one male head represented them in the community and wielded an unquestioned authority within his own household. But this patriarchal system, though still existing to a great extent, is fast breaking up, and every married couple now seek to set up an independent family of their own, and have their proportion of the village land duly allotted to them. The young moujik who has thoughts of setting up in life by no means has his choice restricted to the maidens of his native place. Though the nearest hamlet may be many versts away, lonely moor and gloomy forest are not sufficient to keep the young people of the neighbouring villages from coming into contact, and the elders rather encourage the practice of going beyond the bounds of the “mir” for a wife. The marriage will naturally take place in the winter time, when the harvest has been got in and all the work of the field stopped.

When all the nuptial ceremonies are over — when Dimitri Sergievitch has been crowned as “king” and “head” of Natalie Ivanovna, and Natalie, in her turn, has been solemnly consecrated as the “queen” of

Dimitri's home and affections—the guests, whose religious feelings have hitherto been kept in high tension, relax, and begin with all their might to eat, drink, and be merry. The fun, to a super-refined or even moderately fastidious taste, may be coarse and uproarious; and the quantities of vodka drunk may be larger than is good for the understandings of the wassailers. But in what country does not such excess occasionally occur? and are we in these islands justified in flinging the first stone at the Russian moujik, who has so few pleasures in this life, for not rejoicing with moderation? The drinking propensities of the Russian peasants certainly do not form a specially attractive feature of the national customs; and few affairs of consequence—religious, political, or even judicial—can be transacted without the aid of strong spirits. But it has often been questioned whether the examples of extreme insobriety that may be seen in most Russian towns and villages—and more frequently, it is alleged, in these post-emancipation days—may not be traced as much to the weak stomachs and excitable temperaments of the poorly-fed peasantry as to the potency or quantity of the liquor consumed.

The feasting over, and the jokes cracked, the marriage guests escort the newly-married pair to their home, the horses scampering, *ventre-à-terre*, over the powdery snow, and the shouts and snatches of choruses of the excited drivers vibrating in the keen air.

It is under such exhilarating circumstances that we prefer to glance at the life of the Russian peasant. To perceive that his ordinary lot is a hard and laborious one, you have only to look at his coarse and rude garments, his toil-worn figure, his roughly-built hut;

or to thoroughly satisfy yourself on the subject, step carefully across the mud puddle before his lowly door and enter the sanctuary of his home. The Russian home is a sanctuary in a literal sense, for it has its family shrine and its household gods. The sacred icons and relics, and pictures and figures of Virgin and saint, are the prominent and often the only ornament of the family room; a portrait of the Czar sometimes disputing the place of honour with the holy symbols.

Otherwise, the rough, undressed walls, the soot-begrimed roof, the uneven earthen floor, the rude and scanty furniture, and the close, unwholesome air, are anything but suggestive of the holy and the beautiful. So, you will think, is the appearance of your host, who, besides the stains of daily labour, bears about him a savour of one who has an instinctive aversion to soap and water. There can, however, be no mistaking the warmth and sincerity of his welcome. The seat of honour by the stove is at your disposal; and the mistress of the house brings from some secret hoard, not only black bread and milk, but some luxury in the shape of mushrooms or dried fish, with perhaps a "nip" of vodka. The inmates are curious and interested in your affairs and in the marvels of the foreign world, over which they shake their heads, half in wonderment and half in deprecation. They are simple, kindly, hospitable; shrewd, too, within "the enchanted circle of their conceptions," as a Russian writer expresses it; and patient and long-suffering almost to a fault.

With all his air of simplicity, however—which is sometimes more than half-affected—it would hardly be wise to trust the word of a Russian peasant, or in-

deed of a Russian of any rank. In a bargain he will probably cheat you, if he can. His regard for truth is of the slenderest; and he will tell you a lie—"open, gross, palpable"—with an air of innocence which could not be surpassed by the original wearer of the sheep-skin coat on his back. What can you expect? For centuries his "betters" have tyrannized over and often ill-used him at their pleasure; and fraud and deceit are the natural weapons of the weak.

In noting other features of his character also, while it is impossible not to perceive many blemishes, it is unfair not to keep in view the excuses he has for even his worst faults. He is lazy, shiftless, apathetic, you say, coming from the busy West; but entering the country from the side of Asia—and it should be remembered that the bulk of Russia lies to the east of Mecca—you wonder at the energy and industry of the peasant. The Russian labours hard while he is at it, and if he works spasmodically—in spurts, and not by long-sustained, determined effort—let it be remembered that it is only lately, if it is even yet the case, that he has begun to work for his own behoof. His strong sentiment of reverence, his friendly helpfulness to his fellow, and his love of country are good points that cannot justly be ignored; though it is true that his religious beliefs shade away into gross superstition, and that it is often not easy to discriminate his patriotism from prejudice and ignorance. But though you cannot help, thinking, as you shake hands with your entertainer, how much his appearance could be improved with the aid of a pair of scissors and some soap and water, and that you would even sacrifice some portion of his piety and patriotism



in order to have him more truthful, honest, and sober, it is impossible not to part with kindly feelings from one who bears the burden of his hard lot with such cheerful good nature. The wonder is that so much good has survived, and not that so many rank weeds of evil have sprung up in so neglected a soil.

One cannot enter or leave the village without noticing the timber-built church, which, however lowly, will have its belfry and bell; and bears witness of the devotion of the humble worshippers in bright-painted walls and gilded weather-cock, and in the carvings and decorations placed about the altar. Near by is the house of the village "pope" or priest. There may be little to distinguish the dwelling from its neighbours,—the elder's house may be larger, and the village tavern possess more rooms,—and it is often the case that the worthy pastor himself is in nowise distinguished from his flock in learning or intelligence.

One of the causes of the backwardness of the rural parts of Russia is undoubtedly the ignorance and low social position of the "White" or parochial clergy. Many of them are devout and hard-working men, striving, not unsuccessfully, to raise and to purify those who have been given into their spiritual charge. Many others are "no better than they should be," even in morals—a parasitical race, a little more narrow-minded, lazy, and dishonest than those they live upon.

In excuse for them it must be said that these country clergy are miserably ill-paid. They have no social standing, and no stimulus to intellectual improvement. A parish priest is "passing rich" on £30 a year. His average stipend is said to be between £22 and £25, and

a share of the glebe. On this salary he has to maintain his family. He must daily rise between four and five in the morning, however far below zero the thermometer may be, read the liturgy before midday, and have vespers at sunset. Special services are required of him on innumerable other occasions during the year—on saints' days and holidays; at births, baptisms, betrothals, marriages, and deaths; in blessing processions and new buildings; and in times of harvest, pestilence, or public disaster. He keeps the parish register, and a minute record of all his offices for the eyes of his ecclesiastical superiors. He observes the long fasts of the Church, and on the great yearly festivals he goes the round of his parish, and says a prayer at every house. "On these festive occasions," says Mr. Lansdell, "refreshments stand on the sideboard, and *vodka* is offered to drink." Small wonder that the secular priest is often a beggar and a drunkard.

For the "White" clergy there is no hope of promotion to spur them on to higher aims and efforts. Between them and their "Black" brethren—the monastic orders—there is a great gulf fixed. To the latter belong, as to the monks of the Middle Ages, all the prizes in the ecclesiastical lottery. From their ranks are drawn the bishops, archbishops, and other functionaries of the Church, who wield a political as well as a sacerdotal authority. In the convents and monasteries are concentrated the theological learning and talent found in the Russian Church. It is easy to understand that jealousy and dislike exist between the "White" and the "Black" ranks of churchmen. The former are naturally discontented, and are largely suspected of sympathy with schism and of the practice of the Old Ritual. The in-

mates of the monasteries despise them as unlettered boors, in whom there is hardly a savour of holiness. The village pope is not only allowed to take a wife, but it is expressly required that he should be a married man or a widower, while the monks are vowed to celibacy and seclusion.

Great Russia is thickly scattered over with these monastic institutions, some of which we have already visited,—vast and richly endowed piles, the monuments of the piety, repentance, or policy of bygone generations of czars and boyards. The monkish caste pass a curious hybrid existence, half in a world of the past, and half in the stirring present. There are among them men of commanding talents and enlightened views, that hold in their fingers some of the most important threads that move the national policy; and there are ascetics and fanatics that keep before them an ideal of saintly perfection not a whit less eccentric than that of Peter the Hermit or St. Simon Stylites. There are prelates clothed in purple and fine linen, and bearing on their breasts not only the insignia of their sacred office, but the stars of secular orders; and there are half-naked anchorites who carry penance and mortification almost as far as the religious enthusiasts of the Middle Ages.

The total number of these monastic institutions—male and female—throughout Russia is about five hundred. In discipline and general character they are described as Egyptian rather than Roman. They are of three kinds—the *Lavra*, to which rank only Kiev, Troitsa, and St. Petersburg attain, *Cænobia*, and *Stauropegia*. Life is not all ease and recreation in these celibate establishments, as may be judged from the account of their

daily routine given by one of the monks of the Yurief Monastery at Novgorod to Mr. Lansdell:—"They rise at half-past two—at one o'clock on festivals—go to church till six, and from six to nine they sleep. Then they go to church again for an hour and a half, and afterwards breakfast. They are free to sleep or do as they please till five in the afternoon, when evening service brings them together for an hour and a half, after which they sup and go to bed. They have but two meals a day, never eat flesh, and when observing the fasts eat vegetables only."

It is still the Age of Miracles in Russia. Now and again there arise reports of "miraculous appearances" of the Virgin, and supernatural gifts of images or relics vouchsafed to some convent by the Mother of God or some favourite saint—George, or Sergius, or Nicolas—in reward for penance and sacrifice. Troops of pilgrims visit the old shrines for the cure of diseases, the removal of the reproach of sterility, the remission of sins; and if prayer and penance do not avail them, their faith is stimulated anew by the report of a recent miracle wrought at some less famous resort of the devout. In each reign a new saint is discovered, and after attestation of his sainthood by miracle, is duly canonized. Poor is the monastery that does not possess some relics having thaumaturgic virtues; and in many are preserved the incorruptible bodies of saint and martyr, still fresh and sweet as at the hour of death. The monks are ready to answer for the truth of all these wonders; but, as some one asks, Who shall answer for the monks? Who shall say, also, whether these same monks, living an isolated and morbid existence, with their minds fixed on one range of ideas, and

their individuality merged in that of their order, are the deceivers or the deceived ?

The only other phase of country life that need be glanced at is that of the large landed proprietors—the gentry and nobility of Russia. It has already been said that in extensive districts the proprietors, since the emancipation of the serfs, have removed permanently into the towns, abandoning their country residences to neglect and decay. That, however, is a step in a process that has been going on for generations. Rural life has not the idyllic charms here that it is supposed to have in more western countries ; and if the lord of the soil has lost his most precious privileges—his absolute power over his people—what attraction is there to keep him in his dismal and lonely country-house ? He has acquired tastes for art and literature, or for modern amusements and dissipations ; like his countrymen of all ranks, he has a passion for travel, or he has an ambition to win distinction in the army or in official life. These desires can only be gratified by abandoning the home and the ways of his fathers. The tendency, for long, has been for the nobility to drift farther and farther apart in sympathies and daily life from the mass of the people.

In one sense there is little room for regret that the “good old times” are coming to an end. In most respects they were wicked and brutal times, that are best buried out of sight. There can be no doubt that at no very remote period there were members of the Russian aristocracy who exercised their seignorial rights over the persons and property of their underlings in a scandalous and cruel manner ; though, as we might expect from the national character, the relations existing between masters

and serfs were on the whole of a kindly nature. It is still not difficult to fall in with a Russian proprietor of the patriarchal type, who resides, as his fathers did, on his own land and among his own people in summer's heat and in winter's frost; who has gathered about him a numerous array of descendants and attendants, whom he rules as a father that does not believe in sparing the rod; who reads no books, or only one or two of a devotional kind; who eats and sleeps and dresses after the manner and at the times hallowed by ancient usage; who superintends and perhaps assists in the cultivation of his own estate, following old-fashioned methods instead of leaving it to some German overseer with new-fangled notions of modern cropping and farm utensils; who keeps a plain but hospitable and abundant board; who takes care that his wife and daughters live the secluded and contracted woman's life approved of by earlier generations of Russians, and who sees with dismay that his sons, that have been abroad in the world, are tainted with the foreign manners and ideas that are ruining his country.

We would like to preserve the proprietor of the old school as we would the fossil of some extinct animal. But his day and generation are past, and changed times have brought changed manners.

## CHAPTER X.

### ASTRAKHAN AND ORENBURG.



THE Volga in its lower course flows through the great Czarate or "Royalty" of Astrakhan. That immense territory curves round the northern end of the Caspian Sea for a distance of many hundred miles. In the map it seems to hover—if a country as large as Austro-Hungary can be said to hover—over the waters of that remote and desolate salt sea like a wide-pinioned bird, with one wing stretched towards the Caucasus, and the other touching the Ural range. While thus bounded by two great ranges of mountains, the region is a vast plain, much of the surface of which is beneath the level of the outer ocean.

The Caspian, as has already been said, is some ninety feet below sea-level. Its shores, except where they are overhung by the "cliffs Caucasian" or the buttresses of the Persian plateau, are for the most part low and tame. The shallow bays and inlets on its eastern side are fringed with barren sand-dunes and salt-marshes; and these dismal shores, except where at long intervals a Russian fort has been built, are only visited by wandering bands of Kirghiz and Turcomans. On the west

the white walls of a few old cities, such as Derbend and Baku, overhang the blue waters; and in the south are the Persian ports of Resht and Astrabad, the rich slopes of Ghilan and Mazanderan behind them, backed by the lofty ranges of the Elburz, with their sides clothed with forests and their highest summits crowned with snow.

All this does not redeem the shores of the Caspian from the reproach of sterility and baldness. From the thirsty desert to the eastward, whatever may have been the case in ancient times, when the Oxus is believed to have flowed into it instead of into the Sea of Aral, it receives no river save the Attrek. Apart from the Kur and the Ural, its other secondary affluents are of small consequence. It is by the Volga that the Caspian Sea exists. It is the enormous volume of water brought down by that great river from the forests of Russia that supplies from year to year the waste of water caused by evaporation under a broiling sun and by absorption in swamps and quicksands. The Caspian may be said to be a prolongation of the Volga—to be the basin over which it spreads itself, on finding that it has wandered into a hollow from whence there is no means of exit; and it is the Volga that gives it almost its whole commercial and political importance.

The ancients, and indeed the moderns, had most vague and incorrect notions regarding the “Hyrcanian Sea”—its size, its shape, the scenery of its shores, and its physical functions. They believed that a channel connected it with the sea of the Hyperboreans. It may have been from this misapprehension that the Volga makes so poor a figure in ancient geography, only appearing in a few



doubtful passages as the "Rha." Its wide channel may have been mistaken for that "inlet of the frozen ocean" on the existence of which almost all of the old and the medieval geographers insist.

At the same time, modern hydrographers, such as the late Major Herbert Wood, have pointed out that when the climatic conditions of Central Asia were wholly different from what they are to-day—before continual wars, with pestilence and famine in their train, had destroyed the flourishing states and laid waste the fine forests, the rich grain-fields, and beautiful gardens of Turkestan, and left behind only a bare and burnt-up desert; when, as the saying in these countries goes, a cat could crawl along the orchard walls and spring from fruit-tree to fruit-tree from the base of the Tian-shan to Khiva; or earlier still, when the Oxus and Jaxartes poured their united flood into the Caspian—the level of that sea must have been much higher<sup>A</sup> than at present; while in prehistoric times its basin must have extended far over the level steppe to the north-eastward, and its surplus waters must have poured over the low watershed separating it from the head-waters of the Tobol and Irtish, making this isolated salt lake actually, as Strabo and Pliny represented it, a branch of the Polar Ocean.

The steppes that stretch away almost illimitably from the banks of the Volga, from Saratov downwards, still show traces of these ancient conditions. Life and motion and civilization are concentrated upon the river. Reminders of the world of the West may be seen in the wharves of Astrakhan, the neat churches and schools, and well-trimmed vineyards, melon-plots, and grain-fields

of the Lutheran villages, and the trailing smoke from the steamboat funnel. But when you turn your eyes towards the steppe, you perceive that you are in Asia. The Ural River and Mountains are usually regarded as the boundaries between the two continents. The real line of division, marked not only by the characteristics of the landscape, but by the race affinities, habits, and religions of the people, should be drawn up the Don to the point where it approaches closest to the Volga at Tsaritsin, thence by the latter river to the junction of the Kama, and by the Kama to the Urals. The lower Volga flows through what is really a section of Asia; and the Caspian is an Asiatic lake. To the Russian this territory is still a foreign and partially subdued country—a “land of promise,” where he is only beginning to obtain a firm foothold. The people are nomads, living in tents, roaming over the plain with their flocks and herds in search of pasturage and water—Mohammedan Kirghiz on the left bank of the stream, and Buddhist Kalmuks on the right.

The city of Astrakhan, built on one of the many islands formed by the delta of the Volga, is the only large centre of permanent habitation between the Ural River and the Terek. The present town only dates from the Russian conquest. It is altogether a commercial place, and has already 50,000 inhabitants. It is the *entrepôt* of the business passing between Russia and Persia and India, and the centre of the Caspian trade, which now employs many hundred vessels.

Few towns have a more curiously mixed and diversified population. Like every Russian town, Astrakhan is handsomely provided with churches for the Orthodox,

whose domes and cupolas give an imposing appearance to the city, whether approached by land or water. But there are also mosques for the sons of Islam, and meeting-places for the adherents of the Armenian and other creeds. It was once the centre from which zealous missionary enterprise was carried on by British and German evangelists. The Moravian Brethren had a flourishing settlement at Sarepta, at the point where the Volga delta begins; and the Scotch mission, with John Mitchell at its head, had its main station at Astrakhan, with branches at Orenburg and Karass, and even beyond the Caucasus. These operations have been stopped, but many of the fruits of them remain; and the name of Englishmen, still more of Scotchmen, has a good savour in the lower parts of the Volga.

The earlier cities that dominated this region—Atel, the capital of the Khazar kings; Sarai, where Baty with his horde sat down like an incubus on the bound and writhing carcass of Russia; and old Astrakhan, the seat of the Turkish dynasty that followed, and was finally overwhelmed by Ivan the Terrible in 1554—were all situated on or near the delta of the Volga, though it is now difficult to distinguish their exact sites. Atel, however, is still the title given by the Tartars to the great stream; while the new city at the Volga mouth preserves the name, and is built partly with the stones, of the old capital founded by the successors of Tamerlane.

Situated so far from the centre of Russian authority, the modern Astrakhan has not escaped misfortunes from civil uprisings and foreign attacks. The rulers of Turkestan and the nomad tribes of the steppe have more

than once tried to regain possession of their lost inheritance. But the turbulent regiments of Cossacks of the Don that guarded the country towards the Ural and the Caucasus constituted a greater danger than the enemy they were set to watch. The country during the seventeenth and the greater part of the eighteenth centuries contained all the materials, according to Rambaud, of "an immense *jacquerie*, being full of vagabonds of all kinds, ruined nobles, disrobed monks, military deserters, fugitive serfs, highwaymen, and river pirates."

These malcontents were always ripe for revolt and revolution. Thus in the "time of the troubles," under their leader Zaroutski, they seized Astrakhan, and ruled it in name of one of the many pretenders to the Russian throne. The archbishop was bound hand and foot and sent to Moscow. Seventy years later occurred the great Cossack rising under the celebrated bandit Stenko Razin, the Robin Hood of Russia. He overran all the Don and Volga countries, ravaged the shores of the Caspian, pillaged Persian towns, and for six or seven years threatened to wrest South-eastern Russia from the empire. At Astrakhan one of the voivodes, or civil governors, was thrown from a bell-tower and killed; and an imitator of Stenko improved on Zaroutski's treatment of the ecclesiastical authority, by stripping the archbishop of his robes, half-roasting him, and pitching him headlong from the belfry.

The last of the great Cossack risings was that of Pugatchef, in the reign of the Empress Catherine II. Pugatchef was a Cossack deserter from the regiment of the Yaik, as the Ural River was then called, and a *raskolnik*. He gave himself out as Peter III., the mur-

dered husband of Catherine. The discontented and the fanatical thronged to the pretender's standard, and the Volga, as far as Kazan, which he pillaged and burned, was soon in his hands. Catherine's power trembled; but the imperial troops under Suvarof and Mitchelson at length made headway against the rebel, hunted him into the salt-steppes to the eastward of Astrakhan, and captured him as he was on the point of escaping into Persia.

It was to blot out remembrance of this episode that the name of the Yaik River was changed; and the Cossacks who had taken the leading part in the revolt became henceforth known as the regiment of the Ural. To-day they are like Cossacks generally, an industrious, kindly, and hospitable race of military colonists; hardy and enterprising where warlike duties are required of them, but scarcely less energetic and successful as fishers, hunters, and agriculturists in time of peace. The unanimous testimony of travellers to the good qualities of the Cossacks is fast removing the bad name which their early turbulence and barbarity brought upon them.

Astrakhan is the great depôt for the produce of the sturgeon and other fisheries, on which the prosperity of the lower Volga and the Caspian so much depends. Great quantities of caviare are manufactured here, and exported to all parts of Russia. In this, as in other branches of its trade, Astrakhan owes much to Peter the Great. He came hither in 1722, on the occasion of his expedition against Derbend and the other cities of the Caspian; built the Admiralty, and founded trading companies with Persia and Turkestan. The English had, however, been here long before on the same mission.

In the reign of Ivan the Terrible, who encouraged British trade with the White Sea and Moscow, and carried his admiration of us so far as to propose marriage to our Queen Elizabeth, a London merchant named Jenkinson descended the Volga and hoisted the English flag on the Caspian within a year or two of Ivan's capture of Astrakhan. Jenkinson landed on the eastern side of this inland sea, loaded his merchandise on camels, started boldly into the interior, and reached Bokhara in safety, by a route which even to-day is very imperfectly known. Other journeys were made by the enterprising Jenkinson in the interests of his royal mistress, of the Czar Ivan, or of his own pocket; and it was partly in recognition of his services that authority was given three centuries ago to English merchants to trade in the principal towns of Russia.

Leaving Astrakhan and the banks of the river behind, and striking westward into the steppe, we are not long in discovering that though on the hither side of the Volga, with our faces Paris-wards, we are actually in Asia—among scenery and people that suggest the interior of Mongolia rather than the neighbourhood of a port frequented by passenger steamers and vessels of war. The soil is sandy or saline, and the herbage scanty and coarse. Fresh water is only met with at the end of a long day's march; and the bare plain, extending to the horizon, bears no trace of fixed human habitation. At long intervals the dingy gray expanse of the steppe is faintly mottled by the still more dingy felt tents forming the *aul* of a wandering tribe of Kalmuks; or we come upon a group of savage-looking shepherds watching flocks of cattle and sheep scarcely more rough-coated and

wild than their herdsmen. Then a party of Cossack horsemen files past on some picketing duty, or a train of camels laden with wool or felt-cloth moves slowly across the waste on its way to Astrakhan. We will pass on the route small basins, enclosed by sandy ridges, and covered by a saline efflorescence, looking in its dazzling whiteness like newly-fallen snow. In some of these depressions men will be seen at work cutting up the saline deposit—the residue of what once was a bitter lake—into cakes, and piling them up in pyramidal form for transport. On some height a rude windmill may occasionally be descried spreading its ragged sails; at intervals much more remote a *kuraul*, with its Buddhist temple of Chinese design, and wooden shanties for the high priest and inferior lamas, will be encountered. Otherwise there is nothing to occupy eye or mind.

Near the Caspian and the Volga stagnant pools of water are met with, but they are mostly brackish and undrinkable. The march is a continual climbing and descending of sandy hillocks, which have been blown by the prevailing winds into long ridges; or a sand-storm drives the sharp gritty or saline particles into the faces of the travellers, and obscures the air with whirling dust. The region at no very remote date—as geologists count time—has been the bed of a sea. Probably the Euxine and the Caspian mingled their waters in this depression. The soil and climate seem to be gradually growing more arid. In quite modern times the Kouma River made a small perennial contribution to the Caspian. Its lower course, except in rare occasions of heavy flood, is now a bare furrow between two sand-banks, with jungly thickets and marshes at the mouth, where

robbers sometimes find shelter ; and there is no permanent running stream between the Volga and the Terek.

The nomads inhabiting these steppes are for the most part Kalmuks. They are a Mongolian people, whose original home was in Soungaria, among the high grassy valleys of the Tian-shan range, to the south and east of Lake Balkash, and within the limits of what is called Chinese Tartary. Their ancestors formed part of a powerful confederation of Mongol tribes—the Tchoros, Durbot, Hoshot, and Torgot—formed by the Soungarian clans with the object of reconquering China, lost by the descendants of Ghenghiz Khan. The Oirats—the Four Allies—quarrelled with each other in later times ; petty chiefs made themselves independent and broke away from the confederation. The Kalmuks—the “remnant” or “residue” of the alliance, composed chiefly of the Torgot and Durbot tribes—could no longer hold their old ground against their enemies, and in detached parties, under various chiefs, they began their movement westward.

This last and not least remarkable of the Mongolian migrations into Europe began in 1670, and was completed about 1703. They crossed the steppes of the Kirghiz with their flocks and herds, their women and children, in spite of the opposition offered by these hereditary enemies, passed the Yaik, and spread over the then unoccupied plains between it and the Don.” There they pastured their flocks and thrived in wealth and numbers till the year 1771, when a still more extraordinary impulse set them in motion again towards their home in the east.

Through some of the secret and mysterious sources by



which news travels in Asia they learned of a strange revolution in Soungaria. The Mongol inhabitants—their old allies and enemies—had been attacked by the Emperor of China, and of six hundred thousand souls not one, it was said, was left alive in the country. The Kalmuks determined to return and occupy their old home. They set out from the Volga in the winter of 1770–71, and began, on foot and on horse and camel back, with all their goods and chattels, their flocks of goats and sheep, their old people and their infants in arms, the three thousand miles' journey through the snow-covered desert.

The story of disaster and suffering has been brilliantly told by De Quincy in his "Flight of a Tartar Tribe." The Russian Government obtained word of the intended migration, and endeavoured to intercept the tribe at the Ural. They partly succeeded. The ice was not strong enough to bear the vast host of refugees, and the rear portion were "headed back" beyond the Volga into the present Kalmuk country. Half a million of souls, however, crossed the river and continued their flight across the Kirghiz Steppe, pursued by the Russians, harassed by the Kirghiz and other robber-tribes, and assailed by cold, hunger, and fatigue; and when the forlorn and destitute remnant of the "Remnant" at last reached their old haunts in the basin of the Ili, they found that the hope that had brought them so far had deceived them. The smiling valley was already occupied by Chinese military and convict colonies transported thither from the Middle Kingdom; and the choice of the wanderers lay between retracing the long road they had just traversed, or ascending to the cold hill

pastures and submitting to the yoke of Chinese authority and taxation. They adopted the latter alternative ; and their descendants, as we will by-and-by find, are still in possession of the grassy uplands of the Kunges and Tekes valleys, where they practise the same religion and follow the same traditional pursuits of sheep and horse rearing as do their kinsmen who still linger in the steppes of the Volga.

In some respects, no doubt, the European Kalmuks have benefited by contact with civilized neighbours. In the Russian towns they have a market for the wool, hides, and other produce of their flocks and herds ; and many of the comforts and inventions of Europe find their way to the Kalmuk tent. Their khan is chosen for them by the Russian Government ; a slight taxation is imposed upon them ; and they furnish some companies of skirmishers to the Russian army. Otherwise they are left pretty much to manage their own affairs.

Devout Buddhists as they are, their lamas wield a strong political as well as religious influence among them ; and they help to preserve the native language, customs, and dress. Nothing will induce them to settle down permanently at any particular spot ; even in the *kuraul* the high priest and his vicars have their brown felt tents set up by the side of their wooden huts, and remove to them in the winter. Visitors to the Kalmuk country have not been complimentary in their allusions to the manners and appearance of the tribe. Dr. Clarke, in his "Travels," commits himself to the strong statement that "nothing is more hideous than a Kalmuk." "High, prominent, and broad cheek-bones ; very .

little eyes, widely separated from each other; a flat and broad nose; coarse, greasy, jet-black hair; scarcely any eyebrows; enormous prominent ears," are among the features with which he endows them; and he goes on to tell how they prepare their favourite steak of horse-flesh by placing it below the saddle and sitting on it during a day's journey, and to give other broad details of their domestic life and tastes, such as seldom now-a-days find their way into books of travel.

A recent observer, Mr. Wallace, bears scarcely less emphatic testimony to the supreme repulsiveness of these poor Mongols. "To say simply that they are ugly," he remarks, "is to pay them an unmerited compliment. There is something infra-human in their ugliness. They show in an exaggerated degree all those repulsive traits that we see toned down and refined in the face of the average Chinaman. As they belong to one of the recognized races of mankind, we must assume that they have souls; but it is difficult, when we see them for the first time, to believe that a human soul lurks behind their expressionless, flattened faces and small, dull, obliquely-set eyes."

All this is probably true, but there is evidence that even the Kalmuk is improving, in look and manners, with the times. According to our ideal of beauty he is certainly far from handsome; and his notions about cleanliness are most rudimentary. He still preserves the taste for horse-flesh which existed among his ancestors so long ago as the days of Herodotus, and he does not scruple to make a stew of dog, cat, or rat. But judging from the descriptions of M. Mely, one of the latest visitors to the country of the Kalmuks,

it would now be rash to say with Clarke that "they are more filthy in their persons than perhaps any other nation," and that "so horrid and inhuman is their appearance that it was difficult to distinguish the sexes."

Instead of "gigantic figures running about stark naked," M. Mely found the population rather elaborately dressed in striking costumes of red, white, black, and yellow, and the women markedly distinguished in their garb from the men. By the high priest he was entertained to an elaborately-served meal, which included caviare, champagne, and Nantes sardines, as well as mutton in every possible form;—the hangings of the guest-chamber of this celibate establishment were of *cretonne*, and represented the amours of Louis XV. On the walls of the adjoining temple were designs of gods and goddesses, on rice paper, executed by native artists, and showing no despicable skill; and hung around it was an imposing array of musical instruments—enormous trumpets of brass and silver, tambourines, gongs, and fifes—for the religious services in honour of Buddha. From the aspect of the country, the bare plains, the black tents, the flocks of horses, sheep, and camels, the prayer-mills, the peak-gabled temple, and the appearance of the people with their flat faces, tightly-drawn eyelids, thin beards, and pigtails, it was easy for the traveller to imagine that he had been suddenly transported four thousand miles eastward, and was in the heart of Thibet, the Holy Land of Chinese Buddhism.

The steppes between the Volga and the Ural are the continuation of those between the Volga and the Don,

and repeat the same features of scenery and soil. Here, also, are salt and thirsty plains, covered by a thin growth of coarse grass, wandering shepherd tribes, and rivers that lose themselves in the sand.

The people that occupy this tract are the Kirghiz of the Bukeief tribe—the Inner Horde, as they are called—who removed hither in the end of last century, when the land was left vacant on the departure of the Kalmuks for High Asia. They are of more peaceful and settled habits than their kinsmen beyond the Ural. But this is probably owing to their neighbourhood to the seat of Russian authority rather than from possessing more industrious and honest instincts; for they are an offshoot of the Little Horde, which in past times has been quite abreast of the Great and Middle Hordes in deeds of plunder and murder.

The country ranged over by this tribe extends almost to Orenburg and Orsk—the farthest outposts of Europe towards the east. Both are comparatively new cities; dusty, dreary, and formal, like all Russian towns of their class, but noteworthy as starting-places for the journey across the desert to Russian Turkestan and the famous cities of Central Asia. A traveller bound on such an expedition has generally to spend some days at Orenburg laying in supplies, selecting postilions, and making other preparations for the trip; and in this way it has come in for a larger share of descriptive notice than it perhaps deserves.

The most interesting of the features of Orenburg, as of Astrakhan, is, the extraordinary diversity of type, language, and dress presented by its population. On the “threshold of Asia,” the Tartar elements that the

traveller has already observed, if he has come hither by way of Astrakhan or of Kazan, assert themselves more prominently. "The wide streets crossing one another at right angles," says Mr. Schuyler, "the well-built wooden and plastered houses, the shops, the churches, the boulevard and public square, the immense government buildings used for barracks, storehouses, and schools, give the place a thoroughly Russian air; while, on the other hand, the caravanserai, with its beautiful mosque and minaret of white stucco—the Tartar mosque, the camels, in caravans, single or harnessed to waggon—the crowds of Tartars, the Kirghiz on horseback, in their dirty rags, with rude caps—the bazaar with the Bokharan, Khivan, and Tashkend merchants, in long robes striped with many colours, and with turbans on their heads, showed that the inhabitants of the place were thoroughly Asiatic."

Orenburg has been marked out as the starting-point of a line of railway advocated by M. de Lesseps, which the promoters propose to carry to Samarcand, and ultimately, perhaps, to India; and if this scheme is ever carried out, the future of the city will probably be a brilliant and prosperous one. We do not propose just now, however, to penetrate into Asia, either by railway train or on camel-back, having still a large area of European Russia to survey, and for the present must content ourselves with the glimpse of its bazaars and caravanserais, its desert plains and its roving horsemen, that can be obtained from the streets of Orenburg.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE URALIAN PROVINCES.



THE flat monotony of surface presented by the Astrakhan Steppe is broken long before we reach Orenburg. There have been symptoms that a country of running streams, and what is much more rare in Russia, of mountains, is being approached. Cultivated land and permanent dwellings reappear; trees, in thin clusters and straggling lines, begin again to show themselves; the salt wastes become less frequent; and a thicker growth of grass covers the sandy soil.

On the upper waters of the Yaik, it is no longer possible to doubt that the lower spurs and valleys of the Ural chain have been entered upon. This great mountain range, one of the most important geographical features of the Russian Empire, extends in an almost north and south direction for between thirteen hundred and fourteen hundred miles; and for the greater part of that distance it forms the boundary of Europe and Asia. Few mountain systems of such extent have so low a general elevation and so marked an absence of predominating peaks. The highest section of the Urals is the northern portion—the “Barren Ural,” as the Russians

term it; but seldom do the summits rise beyond five thousand feet over sea-level, and few or none of them, even in the extreme north, are covered with snow all the year round. The declivity is more marked on the western than on the eastern side of the mountains; but so gradual is the slope in some places that, even when ascending from the European side, the traveller is scarcely aware that he has left the plains of Russia when he is already in those of Siberia. Formerly, when the passage across the mountains by the main route from Perm to Ekaterinburg was made by *tarantass*, a stone by the side of the track, bearing on one side the legend "Europa," and on the other "Asia," was sure to attract notice. Now the journey between these cities is made by rail, and the traveller learns of his passing from one continent to the other by coming successively to the stations of "Europa," "Ural," and "Asia."

From its highest point the "dorsal ridge" of the range gradually declines in height as it approaches the Frozen Ocean, into which it projects in a long peninsula, terminating at Vaygatz Strait, and separating the Atlantic from the Kara Sea. Vaygatz Island—a sort of "Holy Land" of the Samoyedes—is probably a prolongation of the chain; and the bare mountains of Novaya Zemlia beyond, running in the same general direction, and projecting far into the "Polar pack," may be regarded as a continuation of the Urals.

In the opposite direction also—towards the south—the height of the chain decreases, and in the province of Orenburg it separates into diverging ranges. Two of these run down into the Kirghiz Steppe, gradually merging into the waterless Ust-Urt Plateau, between



the Sea of Aral and the Caspian, or extending eastward in a low "saddle" that forms the water-shed between the Obi and the rivers of the steppe, and joining the great Asian mountain systems of the Tian-shan and Altai. Another branch follows the western bank of the Ural River, giving rise to scanty and intermittent streams, such as the Great and the Little Utzen, that disappear in the sands or spread into salt marshes; and it ends, like its rivers, and like many a caravan that has attempted to cross these wastes, by losing itself in the desert.

North of Orenburg, the Ural chain sharply divides the river systems of Siberia from those of Russia proper. All the rain that falls on the eastern side of the range finds its way into the Tobol and other branches of the great river Obi; while the streams running down its western slopes are tributaries of the Kama, and drain into the Caspian, or, in more northern parts, flow to the Atlantic by the Petchora. Great forests of oak and pine clothe the lower slopes of the range, and even the higher summits are often heavily timbered with birch and the hardier cone-bearing trees. Wild sequestered nooks are found in these hills, about the head-waters of the Kolva—the "tap-root" of the Kama—or in the innumerable gorges and valleys of the feeders of the Tobol, where the trapper and the mining pioneer have not yet penetrated; and in the deserted northern tracts, where there are no treasures of gold or of copper to tempt the prospector, the only inhabitants are a few Samoyede families, who wander with their herds of reindeer from dreary hill-side to barren valley in search of pasture.

The Urals, however, are rapidly becoming more thor-

oughly and extensively known. Their importance consists not only in the geographical position they occupy, and the meteorological and hydrographical functions they fulfil, but also in the variety and richness of their mineral wealth. Gold and silver have been found here from time immemorial, but it is only since the time of Peter the Great and the foundation of Ekaterinburg—named in honour of Catherine I.—that they have been worked in a systematic manner. Besides the more precious metals, including platinum, there are rich mines of copper, iron, and salt, quarries of marble, porphyry, and granite, and wells of naphtha and other mineral oils. Among the precious substances found are the emerald, topaz, agate, chrysolite, garnet, beryl, jasper, malachite, serpentine, and rock-crystals of great size; asbestos, gypsum, pipe-clay, sulphur, saltpetre, and nitre. Diamonds have been found, as Alexander von Humboldt had predicted, though none of large size. One newly discovered gem—named the Alexandrite, after the emperor—has the peculiarity of displaying two colours, crimson by day and green by night. It was with the object chiefly of throwing light on the peculiarities of their geological formation that pilgrimages were made to the great “Girdle” (as the name Ural means in the Tartar tongue) by Humboldt, Sir R. Murchison, and other distinguished scientists. The mines are partly the property of the Crown, and partly belong to the great Russian families Demidof, Stroganof, Lazaref, and others, who have enormous possessions in Perm and the adjoining provinces.

The Demidof mines are at Nijni Tagilsk, just beyond the Urals, but within the province of Perm, which laps

over into Asia. At these works thirty or forty thousand workmen are employed. The quantity of wood annually consumed as fuel at the forges, if it were built in a stack, would form a pile of logs twice as large as St. Paul's Cathedral. The principal minerals worked here are magnetic and manganese iron ores, both of remarkable richness, and also copper. Magnetic iron ore is found near the surface, and is dug out in terraces, and carted direct to the forges. The copper lodes are reached by a shaft six hundred feet deep, and in these workings Mr. Lansdell, the latest English visitor to the mines, dug out pieces of malachite in the natural state.

Of late years the yield from the mines of the Ural has largely increased in value; new methods of extracting the ore have been introduced, and wealth and population have flowed into and across the mountains, which have become a Russian California or Nevada. In spite of scientific and practical survey, much of the resources of the region have still to be discovered; and the "Girdle" of the empire is likely in the future to be still more valuable, and indeed indispensable, to Russian industry than it is at present.

Ekaterinburg, the capital of this metalliferous district, has an aspect and a society such as would hardly be looked for so far from the ordinary paths of commerce and culture. The town is regularly built, and many handsome houses line its clean and airy streets. As a matter of course, there are numerous churches and other public buildings, including a government mint and botanic gardens. The restaurants and hotels are admirably served; there is an admirable hospital and an orphanage supported by voluntary contributions; and

there are artistic, literary, and musical coteries quite abreast of Western Europe in their tastes and ideas.

The whole of the inhabitants of the town are more or less dependent on the forges and other mining establishments of which it is the centre. The lapidaries are famous for the artistic skill of design and delicacy of finish of the work they produce. Even the ragged urchins in the streets are dealers in precious stones and ores on a small scale; and the visitor unskilled in the detection of true from false jewels is likely to come away from Ekaterinburg with the impression that the culture of the population is more highly developed than their honesty.

The fishing, agricultural, stock-rearing, bee-keeping, timber-cutting, and fur trades also rank high in importance in the Uralian provinces; and the Kama is the great channel by which the products of the vast region comprehended within the governments of Kazan, Ufa, Perm, and Viatka—an area of two hundred and sixty thousand square miles, and containing nearly eight million inhabitants—reach the markets of Russia and Western Europe.

Before noticing, however, some of the aspects which nature and man present in this remote corner of Europe, we must say something of the famous city of Kazan, the vestibule to the Kama Valley and the key to much of its history. Kazan is situated not exactly at the junction of the Kama with the Volga, but some little way above, on the left bank of the latter stream, where it is joined by the small river Kazanka. There is little doubt, however, that the command it possessed of the entrance to the great eastern affluent of the Volga determined the choice of the site, and mainly contributed to its im-

portance—as was the case, in like manner, with a still earlier capital of this region, Great Bolgary, which once rose on the river bank some distance below the Kama mouth.

When part of the Bulgarian nation had migrated, under their leader Aspurach, to the southern side of the Danube, the power that had long ruled the Volga began to fall into decay from the assaults of the Tartars on one side and the Russians on the other. At the time of the Mongol invasions, Great Bolgary was ripe for overthrow, and the captains of the Golden Horde did not spare it. The city disappeared. A few mounds of ruins, among which have been found Cufic and Persian inscriptions and coins bearing Armenian and Arabic texts, alone attest its former importance and the extent of its commerce. The heterogeneous collection of half-Finnish, half-Tartar peoples inhabiting the banks of the Volga and Kama fell under the power of the Khāns: Kazan rose in the place of Great Bolgary.

Sayn, son of Baty Khān, is said to have been the founder of Kazan; but whoever he was, he had a fine eye for situation and strategic importance. The city soon rose to wealth and political consequence. It broke loose from the control of Serai, and formed a separate khanate, that was sometimes at war and sometimes in alliance with the princes of the Nogai and Kipchak Hordes, and almost constantly at feud with the Grand Princes of Moscow. In the palmy days of Mohammedan rule it was a great seat of Oriental learning. Its mirzas, or nobles, were men, of culture, of dashing and splendid exterior, and allied, many of them, by marriage to Russian families of rank; and its muftis, mollahs, and imauns

were deeply read in Arabic lore. Moscow borrowed from Kazan models of æsthetic taste as well as notions of polity.

At length the aggrandizing policy of the Grand Princes began to have its effects, and reprisals came from the side of Russia. Ivan the Great captured Kazan, though he could not keep it; and his grandson Ivan the Terrible finally destroyed the power of the khans after a bloody struggle, in which the Tartar city was repeatedly besieged by land and water. It was the first successful siege undertaken by the Russians according to modern rules of war. The final assault was directed by Czar Ivan himself, and led by Prince Kourbsky; and the bravery of the attacking force did not exceed the desperate valour of the Tartar warriors, who retreated from the walls to the palace of their prince Ediger, and died fighting around him. On this memorable day, the 2nd October 1552, the laws and authority of the Czars were extended beyond the Volga and Kama, and Russia stepped over into Asia.

The later history of Kazan has been on the whole quiet and prosperous, though so late as a hundred years ago it was ravaged and burned by the Cossack outlaw Pugatchef, and it has suffered at other times from more than its share of those destructive conflagrations that fall to the lot of every Russian town. To-day it is a larger, grander, and more learned city than ever it was under its independent rulers. It counts some ninety thousand inhabitants, famous throughout Russia for their industrial skill and enterprise. Finely placed on the steep slope of a hill overlooking the Volga and the Kazanka, with rich meadows spreading round it which are parti-

ally inundated when the rivers are in flood, the striking architectural features of the city are seen to the best advantage. Tall cupolas and minarets rise above the walls of the kremlin or from among the masses of private buildings and gardens, and prick the air in fantastic designs, in curious contrast to the ranges of smoking factory chimneys that in another direction bear witness to the busy industrial life of Kazan.

The chief manufacture of Kazan is its morocco or "Russia" leather; and little less important are its soap and chemical works, its distilleries, and its workshops for the production of cutlery, jewellery, and cloth. It is the *entrepôt* of the commerce passing into Russia from the Caspian, from Central Asia, and from Siberia; and hundreds of vessels that ply on the Kama here discharge their cargoes of fish, timber, minerals, and farm produce. But Kazan is still more justly proud of its academical distinction. Its university is one of the most thriving in Russia, the Oriental languages being studied here with especial success; and the town is largely endowed with other means of instruction, in the shape of libraries, museums, observatories, botanical gardens, gymnasia, and normal, theological, and military schools.

Few mementoes of the period of Tartar rule remain in the old capital of the Khans; and the Sumbeke Tower, which is popularly attributed to this era, was probably built at a much later period. Ivan the Terrible did all in his power to obliterate every memorial of the old regime, and even destroyed the tombs of the Tartar kings. The frequent fires have also cleared away the traces of the past. There are several mosques, and in the Tartar quarter the houses are built after the model

of the Mohammedan East ; but it is in its population—about an eighth of which are still adherents of the creed of Islam—rather than in its architecture, that Kazan shows traces of its Oriental relations.

The Tartar inhabitants, however, have long ago lost the restless nomadic instincts of their ancestors and their passion for war and plunder. The original Mongol stock that came hither with Sayn Khan has disappeared, or been absorbed by later immigrants, and the language and type of features of the Tartars of Kazan are those of the Turki tribes that followed the banners of Tamerlane from the banks of the Oxus and Jaxartes. They are now the rivals of the Russians in the peaceful fields of commerce and manufacture, and writers could be quoted who place them above the Slavs in intelligence and industry. There can be little doubt that the Tartar is at least the more sober and more honest, and many of the highest positions of trust in the land are filled by individuals of the old dominant race. In their habits and domestic arrangements they strive to follow the laws of the Koran. In the interior of the houses of the better off a multiplicity of carpets, cushions, and divans take the place of tables and chairs, and the guest is treated with patriarchal hospitality and courtesy. Polygamy is recognized, though not generally practised ; the women among the richer classes are kept apart in the harem, and though they now move abroad without the veil, they still shroud their faces in a shawl when a Giaour gazes at them too curiously.

The Government treats its Mussulman subjects with tolerance and equity. Attempts were made in earlier times to proselytize the Tartars to the Orthodox



Church. These were partially successful, so long as outward conformity to the Christian faith only was required, and large bribes were held out as the reward of conversion. But it soon appeared that the nominal converts were in secret as much attached as ever to their old customs and creed; and when ukases were issued, ordering that means should be taken "to pacify, imprison, put in irons, and thereby unteach and frighten from the Tartar faith, those who, though baptized, do not obey the admonitions of the Metropolitan," the utter failure of the official propaganda came fully to light. The Mohammedan population are now freely allowed to have their own ecclesiastical organization and to practise the rites of their faith, though the loss of civil rights and deportation to the Siberian mines is still the penalty of any attempt to persuade a Christian to apostatize to Islam.

In the villages of the province of Kazan, Mr. Wallace tells us, the two populations—Russian and Tartar—live together in perfectly good fellowship, in spite of their past rivalry of race and creed. "Near one end of the village stands the Christian church, and near the other the little metchet, or Mohammedan house of prayer. The whole village forms one commune, with one village assembly and one village elder; but socially it is composed of two distinct communities, each possessing its peculiar customs and peculiar mode of life. The Tartar may learn the Russian language, but he does not on that account become Russianized." To the simple Russian peasant there is nothing in the fact of his Tartar neighbour being an "infidel" to excite fanatical hatred such as would be aroused by the appearance of heretical

opinions among people of his own kith and kin. As one of them explained: "The Tartars, you see, received their faith from God, as they received the colour of their skins; but the Molo-kani" (Milk Drinkers, who do not observe the Orthodox fasts and reject the worship of images) "are Russians who have invented a faith out of their own heads."

The Bashkirs, a race closely allied in language, customs, and type to the Kazan Tartars, and also professing the Mohammedan faith, are as yet but half broken in to stationary and agricultural life. There are nearly half a million of them, compared with a million and a quarter of the "Tartars proper," in the provinces of the Ural and in the Orenburg steppes; a people partly living in tents and partly settled in villages, where they breed cattle and keep bees. The Bashkir is generally an intelligent and pleasant fellow, and the traveller may, as a rule, rely on his skill and trustworthiness if he engages him for the onerous duty of *yemstchik*, or postilion; for he will not get drunk, as a Russian or a Finnish driver probably would, and as a rule he will be careful, honest, and civil. Schools have been for some time established in the Bashkir country. The race are taking kindly to agricultural pursuits, and it is probable that they will ere long entirely give up their pastoral and nomadic life; and their example will probably be followed by the neighbouring tribes of Meshtcheriaks, Teptiars, and others, as Russian colonization encroaches upon their domains.

While the tribes of Turkish descent are for the most part found on the steppes, or on the margin of the forest region, seeming never well at ease while at a distance,

from the open country, the still more numerous Finnish races of these parts prefer to hide themselves in the gloom of the deep woods. No ethnologist has ever succeeded in unravelling to his complete satisfaction the ancestry and race affinities of these aboriginal peoples of Russia. That a thousand years ago they had things pretty much their own way in the northern and eastern parts of Russia; that they are more closely connected by blood and language with the Turanian races of Northern Asia than with the Aryan peoples of modern Europe, and themselves form a division of the human stock that includes populations so widely separated and so diverse in culture as the Magyars of Hungary and the Samoyedes of the Obi, are doctrines pretty generally admitted.

As long ago as 886, the Magyars, under their leader Arpad, left their homes in the Ural, and passing the Carpathian Mountains, overthrew the barbarian power that Huns and Avars had established on the ruins of the Roman rule in Pannonia. The language and many of the legends of the dominant race of the Danubian plains still attest how closely they are akin to the rude peoples beyond the Volga. But the entangled relationships between Tcherimis and Tchuvash, of Votiak with Mordvin, of Permian and Zyranian, Voghul, Ostiak, and Samoyede, who shall unravel?

Some of these races are rapidly losing their peculiar type by amalgamation with the Russian colonists and adoption of their language and habits; and in a generation or two the old Permian and Zyranian dialects, into which St. Stephen of Perm translated the Scriptures five hundred years ago, may, like many of the

other Finnish dialects, cease to be spoken as a living tongue, just as has happened with the Cornish and Cumbrian languages in our own country. Others of them, such as the Voghuls, are found on the Asiatic side of the Urals, in remote swampy and forest districts into which Slav immigration has hardly begun to penetrate, and are still a people almost in a state of nature, living by the chase of the elk and bear, the trapping of fur animals, such as the marten, the sable, and the beaver, and by fishing, and who acknowledge the authority of the Czar by an annual tribute of undressed skins.

The Samoyede lives far away, beyond even the limits of the birch woods, on the desolate *tundra* lands adjoining the Icy Sea, in a region where no one is likely to disturb him or envy him his heritage. On the other hand, the Votiaks, Tchuvashes, and Tcherimis are surrounded by Russian populations. They live in little communities apart, forming, as it were, islands, promontories, and peninsulas in the encroaching ocean of Slav immigration. Here they still speak their ancestral tongue, and practise their semi-pagan rites, and dress, eat, and live after the manner of their Finnish forefathers. "Their true habitat," says Latham, speaking specially of the Tcherimis, "is the oak-tree forest, with its underwood of buckthorn, spindle-tree, and hazel," occupying the ridges between the streams that feed the Volga and the Kama.

The limits of the region where Finnish customs and languages still prevail may be traced by the clearings and the river-courses—colonization, as in other countries, having followed the channels and valleys of the rivers. But it is not to be supposed that the enclosure and isolation of these aboriginal peoples mean that they have

been exterminated or driven forcibly back into the wilderness, as is the case in countries colonized by the Anglo-Saxon. The Russian has not our unconquerable pride and sense of national superiority. He does not consider himself so infinitely exalted above the people among whom he makes his home as to disdain to intermarry with them, or to feel it intolerable that they should occupy the same social footing with himself. A natural process of absorption of the original elements of the population has therefore been an accompaniment of Russian colonization; and throughout the northern parts of the empire there are large admixtures of Finnish blood, even in districts that now seem most characteristically Slav.

In the Kama Valley this process may be seen in active operation, and something has already been said of the rapidity with which the "Russification" of the country is proceeding. The "religious difficulty" does not interpose as an obstacle to the mixture of Russ and Finn, as it does in the case of Russ and Tartar. Officially the whole of the Finnish populations, with the exception of a few tribes that in earlier times were converted to Islam, are classified as Orthodox Christians. In reality, however, the nominal adoption of the "Russian gods" has made but little change in the religious beliefs of these races. Their observances, so long as their paganism was undiluted, consisted chiefly of magical rites performed by their "medicine men" to ward off the evil influences of the spirits of the wood, the river, and the snow, and to keep the unquiet ghosts of the dead in their graves, and familiarly-worded prayers to their gods, accompanied by presents for good harvests and successful fishing.

It was no difficult task to induce these primitive pagans to add the Virgin Mother and St. Nicolas to their pantheon, and even place them in the first rank of the invisible powers that dispense blessings and calamities among the children of men; but they did not think it necessary to lay aside their old divinities, to whom they still put up petitions and offer sacrifices. According to Wallace, Tchuvash peasants have been known to pray first to their own deities and then to the Greek saints for the good things of this life, or for vengeance on a neighbour. A Tcherimis, after recovery from illness, will sacrifice a young foal to Our Lady of Kazan, whose miraculous image was found unscathed in the ashes of a great conflagration, and whose shrine in the Bogoroditsky Convent, close by the kremlin of the old Tartar capital, is the most sacred spot in Eastern Russia. After all, this curious piebald faith of the Finns differs in form rather than in kind from the superstitious beliefs and practices of the Russian peasantry, and among the lower orders of both races Christianity and paganism blend insensibly into each other.

To reach the localities where the Votiak and Tcherimis are thoroughly "at home," it is necessary to make a long trip up the Kama or some of its tributaries. The Kama is a fine, deep, and swift-running stream, with scarcely a shoal or a cataract throughout its twelve or fourteen hundred miles of length; while many of its affluents—particularly the Viatka and the Bielaya—are also adapted for navigation. Its principal riches hitherto have been the fish that abound in its waters, the fine timber that clothes its banks, and the mineral treasures found around its springs in the Ural range. But agricul-

ture is now taking a prominent place among the occupations of the region; extensive clearings are found along its course, and large quantities of grain are grown and cattle raised on the rich deep soil from which the virgin forest has been cleared.

M. Armengaud has given a brightly-coloured picture of the "smiling villages and fertile fields" of the government of Viatka. "Fine churches of brick, of an architecture at once grave and graceful; labourers' houses of two stories, with ornaments carved in the wood; a population healthy, robust, alert, with figures full of freedom, eyes sparkling with gaiety, and a laugh sonorous and communicative; peasants clad like *bourgeois*; domestic animals well cared for and well nourished; active little horses, full of fire and vigour," are among the signs of progress and prosperity enumerated. Nor is this all. "For the first time astonished Russia sees her plebeian children careful of their persons, and attentive to the demands of the toilet and hygiene. Much more, she discovers them occupying themselves with education, and finds them with books in their hands. The peasant possesses the songs of Béranger translated into Russian; and if you watch the young daughter of the house, you will surprise her in some solitary corner with a novel of Dumas *père* in her hand."

This is all very charming, and perhaps generally true, but the colours of the sketch may be heightened a little in order to bring out more effectively the contrast offered by Finnish village life, to catch a glimpse of which a long and rough drive through the oak and pine forests is necessary. Writers differ in opinion on the

question whether the Tcherimis or the Votiak is the dirtier in his person and dwelling and the more uncouth in his garb. Where "doctors disagree" on so fine a point, it would be unjust to pronounce an opinion; and it will probably be thought enough to know that the filth and squalor amid which the Finnish peasant of either tribe contentedly lives are inconceivable, and intolerable to a moderately fastidious eye and nostril.

It is generally admitted that the Votiaks, who number two hundred thousand in Viatka, of which probably they were the original occupants, surpass all competitors in their taste for strong drink. A large proportion—perhaps the majority of them—have fiery red or auburn tresses; while the ordinary type of Finn is swarthy of skin and lank and dark of hair. The broad, flattened face, however, bears testimony of relationship to Turk and Tartar; while, like the rest of their kin, the Votiaks are generally undersized, and clumsy in their movements, and somewhat slow in intellect. They are a saturnine, sad-mannered people while among strangers, whatever they may be with their intimates and over their cups, and more than half conscious of their backward condition, and glad to skulk back again to their woods with their little purchases and gains. They are said to be revengeful and moody in temperament; and their resentment takes odd forms.

M. Rambaud, with a Frenchman's passion for a generalization, says that when the Tchuvash "wish to revenge themselves, they hang themselves at their enemy's door." At the same time, these ancient peoples are not without virtues to set against their blemishes; and they are said to compare favourably with their



Russian neighbours in truth-telling and honesty. To their costumes, however, little commendation can be paid. They are antediluvian and ugly. Their legs are swathed in innumerable folds of filthy rags that even a Neapolitan lazzaroni would be ashamed to wear. The Votiak women bear about on their heads a prodigious structure, chiefly composed of white birch bark, bound with linen bands, and adorned with silver trinkets, coins, streamers, fringes, and embroidery. The Tchuvash ladies don a peaked helmet, and have their backs cased in a covering of leather and metal, "like the trappings of a war-horse." Their sisters among the Tcherimis, says Rambaud, "wear on their breasts two plates forming a cuirass, and ornamented with pieces of silver, transmitted from generation to generation. A numismatist would make wonderful discoveries in these walking museums of medals."

Poor Finnish folk! We may smile at their antique notions of the beautiful and the becoming, but there is something tragic in the thought that they are condemned thus to mould and rust in the damp nooks of their woods, or to be transmuted and absorbed by the conquering race. Their day of grandeur dates at least a thousand years back. This basin of the Kama, and all Northern Russia from Lapland to the Urals, formed in medieval times the powerful state of Biarma, or Beorma, a name that survives in the modern Perm. It seems to have been a kind of Finn confederation, in which the dominant tribe was the Tchuds, now nearly extinct. They carried on commerce with India and Persia by the Volga and the Caspian Sea, and repelled many an incursion of Norse and Icelandic rovers. England held com-

munication with Great Biarma long before the name of Russia was heard of in these islands. Other of Halgoland, one of the sea-captains of King Alfred, made a voyage of discovery to this hyperborean power; and the king, with his own royal hand, wrote an account of the expedition in Anglo-Saxon.

The capital of Biarma is believed to have been situated high up the course of the Kama, probably near Tcherdyn, where considerable ruins are still seen, and gold and silver ornaments, wrought with Indian and Persian designs, have been exhumed. The existence of the precious metals seems to have been known even at this time, and Biarma was a sort of El Dorado of the Scandinavian pirates. Marvellous tales were told of the treasures of gold and precious stones in the palace of the Biarmian kings, and in the magnificent temple of their god Yumala. This structure was said to be built of odoriferous woods, richly carved, and so thickly set with precious stones that it gleamed like a sun over the adjacent country. As for Yumala himself—the Zeus, the Jove, the Odin of the Finns—he bore on his head a crown of jewels, round his neck an immense collar of gold, and in his hand a chalice worth a king's ransom.

By-and-by came the "Good Companions" of Great Novgorod, ascending and descending the streams, drawing their skiffs over the low water-sheds, spreading over the whole north and north-east of Russia, and conquering the Finn peoples by means of the "arms of precision" of the day. The first Novgorodian colony was founded in the twelfth century. A commercial city sprang up at Khlynof—now Viatka—and a flourishing republic was established, and maintained its indepen-

dence till after the downfall of the parent city on the Volkhov. The conquests of the Tartars of Kazan; the proselytizing zeal of St. Stephen, who, about 1372, built the first Christian church, drove out the sorcerers, stopped the sacrifices of reindeer, and cast down the "Old Golden Woman" who had usurped the place of Yumala; and, lastly, the aggrandizing policy of Ivan the Great and Ivan the Terrible, completed the overthrow of the Russ republic and the Finnish state. By the fall of Kazan, the authority of the Czars was extended to the Urals, and soon crossed them.

At the modern town of Perm, and the villages and hamlets sparsely scattered along the Upper Kama and its tributaries, there are few attractions to detain the traveller who may choose to enter Siberia by this route. Society is in an inchoate state. The face of the country is only beginning to assume a civilized look, as the shaggy growth of forest is pruned away and the marshes are rudely drained. The population is composed to a large extent of the same rough and strangely assorted materials that one may find in a newly-settled western state of America—miners and forgers, trappers and hunters, raftsmen and woodcutters, fishermen and pioneers, dwelling in rude wooden shanties, and clearing the virgin forest in order to lay down their crops of rye and barley. You may meet here Leatherstocking, clad in Russian national garb of sheepskin coat and heavy boots; or witness at some "mining camp" in the spurs of the Urals the grim humour and still grimmer tragedy of Poker Flat, or Red Dog, repeated with appropriate local colouring.

Still more wild and chaotic is the world of thought

and passion seething beneath the surface, invisible to the official eye. The government of Perm has been a place of banishment for political offenders, and men and women who have come under the ban of the ecclesiastical law. It has been a Cave of Adullam for the oppressed, the discontented, the restless, and the fanatical. There are communities of Poles, banished thither for taking part in the risings of 1832, 1848, and 1864; and not far off hamlets of raskolniks (champions of the Old Ritual), the solitary cabins of Priestless People, or colonies of schismatics and heretics of still more extreme types, with incarnate "Messiahs" and "Virgins" among them to whom they pay a blind devotion; while beneath, spreading their secret mines far and wide under all sections of society, are Socialist and Nihilist associations, uniting men who perhaps have little else in common than the universal feeling of discontent and unrest.

## CHAPTER XII.

### NORTHERN RUSSIA.



THE Province of Russia," says the worthy Marco Polo in his Travels, "is an exceedingly cold region, of vast extent; and I have been assured that it extendeth even unto the Northern Ocean, and bordereth upon the Region of Darkness, because during most part of the winter months the sun is invisible, and the atmosphere is obscured to the same degree as that in which we find it just about the dawn of day, when we may be said to see and not to see."

Over this darkling hyperborean land, whose features even in the brief summer are half hidden by dense woods and Arctic fogs, we have now to cast our eyes. The quaint words of the Venetian traveller indicate the vague and misty notions that prevailed regarding the northern parts of Europe in his day—the close of the thirteenth century. It cannot be said that our knowledge of the region has even yet wholly left the twilight stage. The contour of the coasts, the courses of the streams, the positions of the villages and little towns thinly sprinkled over a vast territory, and the names of most of the lakes and fens, have long been known. It

is seldom, however, that either business or pleasure brings a stranger into the forest-wildernesses of Vologda or Olonetz, except while traversing the well-beaten routes leading from Archangel to St. Petersburg and to Moscow. Still fewer are the visits paid to the bleak, treeless wastes extending along the shore of the Arctic Ocean from the Asiatic frontier across the mouths of the Petchora and Mezen to the White Sea, or to the lichen-covered hills and dark mossy tarns of Lapland that stretch westward of that gulf to the neighbourhood of the North Cape.

And if these gloomy forests and solitary coasts have few attractions even in the brief but fierce summer, how forlorn and forbidding must they be during the long, dark Arctic night, when the woodman or the fisherman is cut off from his fellows not only by wide distances and deep thickets and marshes, but by the masses of snow, yards in depth, that encumber the rough footpath or waggon-tracks; when the bare tundra-lands are swept by the Polar tempests, bombarded by hail-storms, and besieged by the heavy pack-ice, and Lapp and Samoyede cower in underground burrows, and pray to their divinities for the speedy return of spring!

But even the most remote and desolate tracts are not without traces of the presence of man—for a portion of the year at least. How thin the population is in some parts, however, may be judged from the fact that in the three northern governments of Archangel, Olonetz, and Vologda—a territory with an area exceeding that of France, Germany, and the United Kingdom combined—there are only about a million and a half of inhabitants, or less than three to the square mile. You will find on this northern slope, as in the Uralian provinces

we have just quitted, examples of all the stages of civilization. A fine, sturdy Slav peasantry—a population as vigorous and well grown as any in Europe—is in contact and in contrast with the diminutive, half-nomad peoples that dwell within the Arctic Circle. At Mezen, one of the most northerly inhabited spots in Europe, are political exiles, some of them men of birth and education, living in the midst of a semi-barbarous race that range from place to place in search of food for their flocks of reindeer, or pick up a precarious livelihood by fishing in the streams, hunting the white bear, walrus, and seal on the ice, or searching along the shore for the remains of a stranded whale. Races addicted to the grossest pagan practices are in contact with the fiercest zealots for Orthodoxy and the strict letter of traditional faith that are to be found in Christendom. Religious fanes, blessed not only with the possession of miracle-working bones and images, and the undecayed bodies of sainted thaumaturgists, but with official and autocratic favour—it might almost be called patronage—may be discovered in lonely islands of the White Sea. But to reach them, forests have to be traversed that have for centuries been the retreat of uncompromising schismatics, who look on monkish piety as an abomination and monkish learning as blasphemy.

Archangel was the first Russian port; and it is still in some sense the only place of large maritime trade where the soil, the language, and the customs are thoroughly Russian. The commercial community at the mouth of the Northern Dwina has been for a longer period than any other in contact with European, and particularly with English, influences, commercial and

social. But in the country immediately behind it, the primitive Russian life has continued down to our day little changed by inward movement, and almost uncontaminated by innovation from without. The boyards were never able to exercise an oppressive authority over the farmers, wood-cutters, and fishermen thinly sprinkled throughout this vast and almost inaccessible region of forests and lakes. The institution of serfage never took root here; and when the day of emancipation came, it was found that there were only five bondsmen in this northern area to set free.

On crossing the water-shed from the Kama to the Dwina—the great drainer of the lands inclining towards the Northern Sea—one sees, at least at first, little change in the scenery or in the occupations of the inhabitants. The forests, lakes, and morasses are, perhaps, on a larger scale; and so, too, are the trees, some of them monster larches, firs, and spruces of two hundred and three hundred years' growth. The first beginnings of the Dwina and its tributaries are buried under the dense shades of these ancient woods. The resinous odour of the pines fills the air; the surface may here and there be diversified by knolls and glens, but everywhere the sombre plumes of the coniferous trees assert themselves as the prevailing features of the landscape with implacable monotony. The clearings are smaller and more widely separated. In the more remote localities, towards the base of the Urals, the inhabitants—Zyranians mostly—are peltry hunters, who follow their furry prey in moccasins of half-dressed deerskin, like Hiawatha—

“ Over river, hill, and hollow,  
Through interminable forests,  
Through uninterrupted silence,”



and of whose simple scheme of existence the hewing of the forest or the tilling of the land forms no part.

Nearer the sea, in the central districts of Vologda, wood-cutting and rafting, the distilling of turpentine and tar, fishing and fish-curing, the raising of cattle and exportation of hides and tallow, form the occupations of the inhabitants. Villages, and even considerable towns—such, for instance, as Veliki Oustioug, an old Novgorodian post, now a town of eight thousand inhabitants—are met with on the banks of the streams, which are the main and often the only means of communication. These sequestered communities often enjoy not a little comfort and commercial prosperity, and have their full share of public "institutions," including churches. Thus Vologda, the capital of the province of that name, is provided with some sixty churches; and, in spite of its high latitude and rigorous climate, it is possessed of so many amenities that it has been termed an "Arctic paradise." In Kargopol, a town of two thousand souls, in Olonetz, Mr. Hepworth Dixon says he counted twenty spires.

In some spots specially favoured by southern exposure and fertile soil a little barley, rye, oats, and buckwheat are grown, but not nearly enough for the needs of the population. As in the times of Master Richard Chancelor of the ship *Edward Bonaventura*—the first from our own shores to visit these quarters!—the people still draw their supplies of corn from the more fertile countries to the south. The English mariner, in the year after the taking of Kazan, journeyed by land and water from the mouth of the Dwina to Moscow, which he found to be a city "greater than London with the suburbs, but very rude, and standeth without order;" and he would meet in a

morning many hundred sledges, some carrying corn and some fish, going to and from "the north part of the Duke's dominions, where the cold is so extreme that it will suffer no corn to grow."

In the lower course of the Dwina, within the government of Archangel, and near the shores of the White Sea, even such partial attempts at cultivation are abandoned, and the population are traders, fishermen, lumbermen, and sailors. Spring and autumn are brief intervals of deluging sleet and rain and thick fogs interposed between nine months of grim winter, when land, river, and sea are bound together under a thick covering of ice and snow, and three months of scorchingly hot summer.

With the coming of the genial warmth man seems to imitate nature, and to strive by energetic and ceaseless activity to make up for the long period of enforced inaction. As soon as the streams are clear of ice, rafts of timber begin to descend the Dwina and its tributaries; and the river and its banks present a scene in strange contrast to the white and silent desolation that had reigned a few weeks before. The banks and islands are moist, and green with grass and rushes; the pines, that had during the winter looked like a forest of crystal, have shaken the snow from their branches, and the lighter tints of the new shoots show in beautiful contrast to the sombre shade of the older foliage; and the young leaves begin to sprout on the birch and willow. The stream itself, instead of a silent white avenue of ice, is a fine broad rushing current, down which lines of rafts and *praams* bear the lumbermen with goods and a few ragged pilgrim passengers to the sea. The *praam* is a rudely constructed craft, hurriedly

put together for the single voyage down the Dwina to Archangel with its cargo of oats and rye, where it is generally sold and broken up, the strength of the current preventing these clumsy vessels from ascending the stream.

The mouths of large tributaries, such as the Vichegda, the Vaga, and the Pinega, each leading to extensive but little known districts, are passed in the downward course, and some thirty or forty miles above Archangel the village of Kholmogory is reached. It is now a small place, but is convenient for taking a survey of the past history and settlement of this northern region.

In later times Kholmogory has derived notoriety from being the place of banishment and death of the Empress Anne Leopoldovna, on the accession of her cousin Elizabeth, daughter of Peter the Great. But it has an earlier title to fame. Some writers conjecture that it was the site of the capital of Biarma-land, and of the far-renowned temple of the god Yumala. The Northmen came hither to trade and to fight before the days of Ruric; and Holmgaard, the "Great City," as they called it—which has been corrupted by Russ tongues to Kholmogory—makes a great figure in Norse and Icelandic sagas.

It is in the narrative of the voyage of Other, written by King Alfred about the year 890—about the time when the Varangian princes were transferring the seat of their authority from Novgorod to Kiev—that we have the first sober and authentic record of the navigation of the White Sea, and, perhaps, of the discovery of the mouth of the Dwina. The description of this Ancient Mariner agrees with remarkable accuracy with the condition of

the northern coasts and their inhabitants down to the present hour.

Other or Ochter of Halgoland, in Norway, as appears from the quaint old narrative, was "once upon a time" seized with the desire "to find out how far the country extended due north, and whether any one lived to the north of the wastes occupied by the Northmen." He proceeded on his adventurous voyage—the first expedition of Polar discovery in modern times—at first north, then due east, along a waste shore, until he found the coast bowing directly towards the south, and the sea opening into the land, he could not tell how far; and up this gulf he sailed with a northerly wind for five days. "A great river lies up this land, and when they had gone some way up this river, they returned, because they could not proceed far on account of the inhabitants being hostile,"—the "Biarmas" having well peopled the country on one side of the stream. On the right of the navigator during his voyage, up till this point, "the land was a desert, and without inhabitants, except fishermen, fowlers, and hunters, all of whom were Finnas; and he had a wide sea on his left."

It was not long before the merchant adventurers of Novgorod made their presence felt in this region; and they settled themselves at Kholmogory and other convenient points near the mouth of the Dwina, and had even a post at Mezen, on the Arctic Circle. Thriving trading-stations began to be established on the banks of the great lakes and rivers of this northern land, and commerce to pulse through the arteries of the Volkhov, the Svir, the Onega, and the Dwina, and Lakes Ladoga and Onega, between Great Novgorod and the White Sea.

Anchorites wandered into these countries in search of "deserts" and waste places where they could build their little cells and chapels and live entirely secluded from the world. Missionaries went forth under the protection of the republic to preach the gospel to Finn and Samoyede; and the bands of Good Companions zealously strove, as was their wont, to drive home Christianity at the pike's point.

Sometimes the authority of Bielozersk, on the banks of the White Lake, nearly equidistant from Novgorod and Archangel, extended over a great part of the region. This remote principality had been a seat of warlike and monkish renown since the days when Sineous and Truvor, the brothers of Ruric, established themselves there; and in later times its possession was often contested between Novgorod and the Grand Princes of Suzdal, Vladimir, and Moscow, before it finally fell into the power of the latter. The neighbourhood is still thickly sprinkled with monasteries, churches, and shrines; and the sandy shores of the White Lake are annually the resort of pilgrims on their way northward to the still more sacred soil of Solovetsk, on an island in the White Sea.

The invasions and civil commotions in the south, and the religious persecutions of Nikon, helped to people the territory. During the Interregnum, in 1613—the year that young Michael Romanoff was chosen Czar—the Poles penetrated to Vologda, which they pillaged and burned; and at a still later date Bielozersk was destroyed by a band of Lithuanians and Cossacks of the Ukraine. But as a rule there was profound stillness and peace in the recesses of these northern forests, as there is in the

depths of the ocean when storms are chafing its surface; and within them a free and hardy race grew up, intensely Russian in their instincts and prejudices.

It was the English that first taught Russia the uses of her northern sea-board, and opened up the country to international commerce. In the reign of Edward VI. the "Mystery and Company of Merchant Adventurers," the nucleus of the Muscovy Company, was formed in London, with the great navigator Sebastian Cabot, then in extreme old age, at its head, the original purpose being to explore the northern parts of Europe and "Great Tartary," and to discover "regions, kingdoms, islands, and places unknown and unvisited by the highway of the sea."

Three ships were fitted out, and sailed from the Thames in May 1553, under Sir Hugh Willoughby, Richard Chancellor, and Cornelius Durforth, and were charged with letters from the king addressed to "all the princes and lords, to all the judges of the earth, to whoever possesses any high authority in all the regions under the vast sky." It was hoped that they would be able, by following this northern track, to round the Promontorium Tabin of Pliny—the "uttermost part of the earth"—and thence make easy sailing to China and the Indies, towards which all the Western nations were then running a breathless race. Tempests overtook the vessels in the wild seas beyond the North Cape and drove them far from their course. Willoughby and Durforth rejoined each other, took shelter with their disabled ships in a haven on the coast of Lapland, whence they sent out parties to the east, west, and south without discovering a trace of inhabitants. "Vpon the maine," says

Sir Hugh's journal, as quoted by Hakluyt, "wee saw beares, great decre, foxes, and diuvers strange beasts, as ellons (elks) and such other; which were to us unknown and also wonderfull. Seeing the yeare farre spent, and also very euille wether, as frost, snow, and haile, as though it had been the deepe of winter, wee thought best to winter there."

Here, alongside the remains of the goodly vessels, the frozen bodies of the brave seamen were discovered next spring by Russian fishermen, all having died miserably of cold and hunger. Chancellor held on his way in the *Edward Bonaventura*, entered the White Sea, discovered, or rediscovered, a great river, the Dwina, on the banks of which were already two monasteries—those of St. Nicolas and St. Michael the Archangel, near which the new port of the north was afterwards to rise—and found, to his astonishment, that all this country was under the Grand Duke of Muscovy, Ivan<sup>A</sup> the Terrible.

The enterprising sea-captain ascended the Dwina to Vologda, and thence made his way to Moscow—a journey about as long and arduous as a trip across Siberia would be to-day—and successfully carried out his mission, obtaining leave for English ships to trade with the Dwina. On a second voyage, agents of the Company were established at Kholmogory and Vologda, and Chancellor returned home with the governor of the latter town as the first Russian ambassador to England. He perished, however, with his ship in a storm on the Scottish coast, though the envoy was saved, and was received with high honours in London.

7 A crisis in the history of Archangel—whose painted

spires and wooden shanties soon began to rise on the swampy river bank—arrived a century and a half later, when Peter the Great was founding his new capital on the Neva. He wished to close the port of Archangel in order to encourage the trade of St. Petersburg. This blow was averted, and Peter instead took the town under his especial care. “He fetched,” says Mr. Hepworth Dixon, “masons from Holland to erect lines of bastions, magazines, and quays. A castle rose from the ground on the river bank; an island was reclaimed from the river and trimmed with trees; a summer palace was built for the Czar; and a fleet of ships was sent to command the Dwina mouth.”

Though Riga and St. Petersburg have carried away the bulk of the commerce from the centre of the empire—which in the early times, when Russia was shut out from the Baltic, found its way to the White Sea—Archangel has maintained, and is likely to maintain, a respectable position as the outlet for the wealth and trade of Northern Russia.

The modern aspect of Archangel has been picturesquely sketched by Mr. Hepworth Dixon, and its social life and manners humorously and pithily described by Mr. Edward Rae. The former speaks of it as “a camp of shanties, heaped around groups of belfries, cupolas, and domes. Imagine a vast green marsh along the bank of a broad brown river, with mounds of clay cropping here and there out of the peat and bog; put buildings on these mounds of clay; adorn the buildings with frescoes, crown them with crosses and cupolas; fill in the space between church and convent, convent and church, with piles and planks so as to make ground for gardens,



streets, and yards ; cut two wide lanes from the church called Smith's Wife to the monastery of St. Michael, three or four miles in length ; connect these lanes and the stream with a dozen clearings ; paint the walls of church and convent white, the domes green and blue ; surround the log-houses with open gardens ; stick a geranium, a fuchsia, an oleander, into every window ; leave the grass growing everywhere in street and clearing,—and you have Archangel."

The English traveller who lands here may feel that in one sense at least he is on his native soil. The strand all along the river bank is formed of the ballast that has been discharged from the hundreds of vessels, chiefly British, that every year come to Archangel to load cargoes of grain and flax, tar and turpentine, tallow, hides, oil, whalebone, fish, wax, timber, and spirits, furs and reindeer-tongues—everything, in fact, which the thrifty Russian has to sell ; while he purchases the minimum of foreign luxuries in exchange. The twenty thousand inhabitants of the place are wholly devoted to trade or to religion. Archangel long held a high reputation for honesty in business transactions, and perhaps it still compares favourably with other Russian trading communities. But the traveller, and still more the merchant or shipmaster, will have frequent occasion for observing here, as elsewhere in the empire, that the standard of commercial morality is not superfluously high. In spite of the abundance of public buildings and educational institutions — "cathedral, fire-tower, town-hall, court of justice, governor's house, and museum," with numerous seminaries—municipal enterprise and literary life do not seem to thrive ; and Mr. Rae remarks that

the only branch of science to which he found the inhabitants attached was "the collection of coins—modern coins."

Still more curious to those who forget that the Dwina is to the eastward of the Euphrates, and that they must consequently look for Oriental as well as Arctic conditions, is the fact that in a port which is so much frequented by strangers there does not exist anything that in a Western city would be called a hotel. Other evidences of Eastern taste, and perhaps of ancient intercourse with the civilization of the Arabs, are to be seen in the design and workmanship of the silver crosses and other ornaments worn by the peasantry of these northern districts. Many of these are figured in Mr. Seeböhm's book; and Mr. Rae, who was also an industrious collector of them, declares that so closely do the Northern and Eastern types harmonize, that it is impossible to tell, in certain classes of work, whether the ornaments come from Russia, Iceland, or Barbary. Mr. Howorth, in his "History of the Mongols," accounts for the Eastern character of the northern silver art by the intercourse of Arab traders with the Khazars, Bulgars, and Biarmas of the Volga countries, and the incursions of the Norsemen in the Levant; and the Byzantine origin of the Russian Church has also had its influence.

One reminiscence the summer sojourner at Archangel or in any of the countries around the White Sea is sure to bear away with him—the bite of the mosquitoes. Myriads of these insects awake to life in the short hot season of almost perpetual daylight; and they make up for the briefness of their opportunities by ubiquitous activity. The natives seem to have become partially used to them;

but they "smell the blood of an Englishman" or other foreigner with unfailing acuteness, and are unremitting in their attentions to the stranger. Mr. Cornelius Stone mentions in his account of his travels in New Guinea that neither there nor in Persia, India, Burma, Java, America, or any other country he had visited, had the number of mosquitoes "exceeded *one-tenth* of what they did in travelling through Lapland, from the Arctic Circle to the Gulf of Bothnia, during the summer months." On this journey, he says, "I once counted on my right arm alone one hundred and thirty; two pairs of trousers were scarcely sufficient protection; and I was always compelled to wear a couple of veils round my head, made into a sort of bag. I never wish to visit that part of Lapland again in summer."

Mr. Rae's account of his sufferings is even more pathetic; in short, such is the universal testimony of travellers by land and sea in these regions regarding the remorseless and intolerable assaults of these pests, that to give a description of the White Sea shores and omit all mention of them would be like presenting a melodrama with the part of the "villain" left out.

Dropping down the Dwina, threading the way between the marshy flats, shifting mud-banks, and low green islands, partly covered by scrub, that divide the streams forming the delta of the river, catching a glimpse now and then of the walls of a church or convent, a custom-house or a ferryman's cottage, or a humble cross set up by some pious sailor in token of his deliverance from peril by sea or his safe return from a whaling cruise among the Polar ice, having always in sight on the right and on the left the dark wall of pines bounding the

course of the river and stretching back interminably into the interior, we reach the buoys marking the entrance to the navigable channel, and are afloat in the waters of the White Sea.

The materials are few for supplying a picture of the aspect of this inlet of the Northern Ocean during two-thirds of the year, when it is bound from shore to shore with frost and invaded by heavy drift-ice; when swamp and forest and heath are alike buried under heavy snow, and the sparse population hibernate like the bears, cowering over the fires in their log-cabins or in their sod-built *gammer*. Not many travellers have been found devoted enough to brave the rigours and discomforts of a winter among the Lapps or the Samoyedes, or even of testing the amenities of life at that season of the year in the trading-ports of Archangel, Onega, and Kem.

In summer the shores of the White Sea are in a few spots picturesque and even pretty. Fogs hang over the water, and for days shroud the land from sight; sharp frosts and cutting showers of hail and sleet not only "chill the lap of May," but intrude in the hot summer weather of July, if the wind shift to the north-east. But in the bright sunshine even the shores of Lapland put on a kind of flickering smile.

On the southern shore of the long Gulf of Kandalaks, a district inhabited by Karelians, a quiet, kindly-mannered Finnish race of fishermen, there are some charming bits of forest and river scenery. "A clearing on the forest edge, a small box-shaped log-hut, with blue smoke wreathing from it, a few racks for drying nets, a boat drawn up on the shingly beach, another afloat, an apparatus for drawing salmon nets, a cross standing on a

rock, a sea-eagle sailing overhead, a sunny sky and a sunny sea, a background of spruce and birch, a strip of fir near the beach—gray and blasted as if by some poisonous breath,”—such, says Mr. Rac, are the usual surroundings of the fisherman’s *isba* on the western side of the White Sea. Every summer these poor people make a journey of a thousand miles to the fishings on the desolate Murman coast, in Northern Lapland, or to Finmark, or hire themselves for the still longer trip to Novaya Zemlia and Spitzbergen after seal, whale, and walrus. In the interior they are woodmen or small farmers, and they compare favourably with the Russians in honesty and sobriety. “The sociable, tipsy, thriftless Russian,” says the traveller just quoted, “will not shut himself up as a squatter in the lonely backwoods. The Finn, Quain, or Karelian prefers solitude and independence.”

To the voyager sailing from the mouth of the Dwina to the southern extremity of the White Sea, the Solovetsk Islands on his right arrest the eye by their fresh verdure and the pleasing diversity of their rocky bights and wooded slopes, from amid which rise the spires, cupolas, and roofs of numerous churches, convents, and hermitages. “Each height,” says Hepworth Dixon, who has given a long account of the place, “is crowned by a white church, a green cupola, and a golden cross. A line of wall, with gates and towers, extends along the upper quay; and high above this line spring convent, palace, dome, and cross. Within, the convent looks more durable and splendid than without; wall, rampart, guest-house, prison-tower, and church are all of brick and stone.” “One of the few tidy spots in Holy Russia,” says Mr. Rac.

This lonely group of islets in the Northern Sea has been famous for centuries in the ecclesiastical annals of the Russian Church, and is haunted by warlike as well as monkish memories. In its early days, Solovetsk was the secure retreat of pious monks from Novgorod, who fled hither from the pleasures of the world, in search of a desert solitude where they could wholly give themselves up to prayer and penance. Two of these anchorites—St. Savatie, or Sabbatheus, and St. Zozima, the founders of the Solovetsk monastery—peculiarly distinguished themselves by their devotion and the severity of their ascetic regimen. After their death, miracles were performed at the touch of their consecrated dust, and the monastery became the greatest and most celebrated in Northern Russia.

When the English first came to the White Sea, its fame was already bruited abroad, and Ivan IV. paid it especial reverence. That reputation has continued down to the present day, and has even grown with the lapse of time; and every year pilgrims flock hither from all parts of Russia to kneel at the shrines of Zozima and Savatie, and before the wonderful image of the Virgin, who dispenses here the gift of healing, and has in all times taken Solovetsk under her peculiar care. Peter the Great paid more than one visit to the monastery; and his example was followed by the late Emperor.

It has not, however, invariably received favours from the civil and ecclesiastical powers as by law established. At the time of Nikon's reforms, Solovetsk was the stronghold, the citadel of the raskolniks. It sustained a siege of ten years before it was reduced; and the zealous monks who had pointed the cannon and wielded

the pike in the defence of the Old Ritual did not miss the crown of martyrdom.

The last warlike event in the history of the convent was its bombardment, during the Crimean War, by a British squadron, under Admiral Ommanney, in retaliation for the guns of the monastery having been fired at an English vessel. Shells were dropped through the roof of the principal church, and the buildings set on fire at different places, while the archimandrite and monks sang mass in front of the sacred tombs and the miraculous picture of the Virgin. Not a soul within the walls was injured; and on the strength of this, to the Russian mind, most indubitable proof of divine favour, the fame of Solovetsk rose higher than ever in the estimation of the faithful. In another sense, the existence of a rich, powerful, and prosperous community on this unkindly soil, and amid surroundings so desolate and forbidding, seems little short of miraculous. In spite of their inclement skies, the monks assiduously till the ground, and gather from it not only the grain and herbs, but even the fruits of warmer climes; and notwithstanding their isolation from the world, there are found among them men who cultivate also art and literature with a success that has made their lonely convent a "lamp of learning" in the northern darkness.

Leaving behind us Solovetsk, with its soil so strangely dinted by pilgrims' knees and cannon-balls, we resume our voyage along the shores of the White Sea. We coast, on the left, a low peninsula, with sandy shores and marshy inlets—a barren and solitary foreground backed by pine woods. Where the large rivers discharge themselves into the Bay of Onega, and for some distance up the

western coast, the forests are of larger growth and more widely spread. Farther inland, the country is blotched by shallow ponds and marshes, large and small, which are drained by sluggish streams, or joined to each other after heavy rains, but are stagnant and isolated during the rest of the year. Fish of many varieties ascend these rivers and swarm in the lakes, and they form the staple article of diet. Small patches of barley, oats, and rye are grown, and potatoes and other garden vegetables are sometimes raised.

Before the Arctic Circle is reached, timber begins to fail. The spruce-fir will not grow beyond the sixty-seventh parallel of latitude, and the extreme limit of the Scotch fir is found about  $69^{\circ}$  north. The birch and alder, however, are found growing to respectable dimensions in the extreme north-western nook of Russia—at the mouth of the Pasvig in  $70^{\circ}$  north latitude.

The birch forest fills the glens that run between the gray rocks in Lapland and the Samoyede country, and its bright green foliage and ghostly white stem and branches cover the southern slopes of the hill-sides. Low ranges of hills traverse the country, offshoots apparently of the Ural chain, seeking to establish communication with the great mountains of the Scandinavian peninsula. They feebly mark the water-shed between the Dwina and the Petchora and Mezen rivers, that flow directly into the Arctic Ocean, and they divide the north-flowing and south-flowing rivers of Lapland.

On either side of Lake Imandra, in the "neck" of the great White Sea peninsula, these hills rise to a height of three thousand feet, and are always clad with snow. Under their shelter fine forests rise, and a profusion of



wild flowers carpet the sod. On the northern slopes, exposed to the full onslaught of the Polar storms, even the birch finds it hard to gain foothold and sustenance. Grass gives place to a scanty growth of moss and dwarf-willow. In some places the hills are clad with a snow-like covering of the white reindeer moss, and in search of these pastures the Mountain Lapp moves from place to place with his herd.

Of the two desert tracts into which the northern part of the government of Archangel is divided by the White Sea, the country of the Samoyedes, stretching from Cape Kanin to the confines of Asia, is the more extensive and the more desolate. The Samoyede people only number a few thousand souls, and the interest attaching to them is very far from arising from any attractiveness in their persons or their manners. They claim notice simply on account of the enormous range of country over which they are scattered, and the fact that, living within the bounds of Europe, they are yet essentially idolaters and savages.

They are a stunted, ill-favoured race, with dull, flat faces, small eyes, high cheek-bones, scanty beards, and depressed foreheads; and their low physical type does not belie their intellectual deficiency. The Orthodox Church claims most of them as her children; but it has not won them from their heathenish practices, and has conspicuously failed to teach them the virtue of cleanliness.

One of the most recent observers of Samoyede life—Professor Nordenskiöld—found a tribe professing Christianity, whom he visited near Vaygatz Strait in 1878, still worshipping their idols. Nothing can better illustrate the poverty and degradation of these people than the

primitive appearance of their "gods." "One consisted of a stone which, by the help of brightly-coloured patches, had been made into a sort of doll; another was a similar doll, with a piece of copper-plate for a face; and a third was a little skin doll ornamented with ear-rings and pearls. In general they resembled the rag dolls which peasant children make for themselves without the help of the toy-shops of towns." Of their mode of life and their burial customs Nordenskiöld says:—"The Samoyede tent is formed of deer-skins, and is of quite the same form as the Lapp *kota*. There is always to be found in the neighbourhood of the tent a large number of dogs, which are employed in winter for general purposes, and in summer for tracking boats against the current. At a *simovie* (fishing-place) where we landed, we found, as usual, a burying-place. The bodies were placed in large coffins above ground, with a cross nearly always erected beside them. At one of the graves a sacred picture was affixed to the cross, which must be regarded as a further proof that a Christian reposed in the coffin. Notwithstanding this, some clothes which had belonged to the deceased were found hanging on a bush at the grave, together with a bundle containing food, principally dried fish. At the graves of well-to-do natives, we learned that the survivor even places some rouble notes beside the food, that the departed may not be altogether devoid of ready money on his entrance into the other world."

On the breaking up of the winter ice the whole of this "Siberia in Europe," from the Mezen to the Ural range, is entirely cut off from communication with the rest of the world. The land is a vast half-

thawed, wholly impassable swamp. The rivers are impetuous torrents full of floating ice. Two British naturalists, Messrs. Seeböhm and Harvie Brown, travelled eight hundred miles in sledges over the Government post road from Archangel to Ust Zylma, on the Petchora, in April 1875, and found the track through the forest a "diabolical" series of ups and downs. "Sometimes the sledge would be on the top of a steep hill, the first horse in the valley and the third horse on the top of the next hill. The motion was like that of a boat in a chopping sea, and the sledge banged about from pillar to post to such an extent that we scarcely felt the want of exercise."

Suddenly this snowy covering begins to melt, and then for weeks it is almost impossible to move about out of doors. The Petchora, in its lower course, is a magnificent stream—"fifteen times as broad as the Thames at Hammersmith;" the dark forests of pine are impressive in their stately solemnity, the bare level *tundra* lands spread away to the horizon without break or bound. Wherever the eyes are turned the landscape is vast and mournful and silent; and we look away from scenes so sublime and so solitary with a feeling of relief.

Russian Lapland, the country between the White Sea and Varanger Fiord, where the Norwegian coast begins, is a little less rigorous in climate, and somewhat more green and habitable, than the Samoyede wastes. The Lapps, too, are neither so low in stature nor so poverty-stricken, neglected, and isolated as their neighbours to the east of the White Sea. The seasons are a trifle less unkindly to them, and they have the good fortune to be placed many hundred miles nearer to the influences of civilization. All this is reflected in the

comparatively high social and intellectual condition which the Lapp occupies. The race have partially given up their nomad habits.

In the interior the reindeer is still their mainstay and their comfort; their beast of burden and their dairy animal; the source on which they depend for food and shelter, clothes and companionship. But many Laplanders devote themselves exclusively and successfully to fishing; they make long voyages as sailors and hunters with the whaling and sealing ships, and bring home roubles in their pockets and new notions in their heads. Their communities have a fixed range, with some nucleus of huts on a sheltered river bank or by the side of a lake, where, in the interior, they make diligent attempts to cultivate patches of grain and potatoes, and they are gradually accustoming themselves to agriculture and settled habits of life.

Education has made some progress among them, and they have been found not unapt to learn. If the visitor can conquer his prejudices to dirt, grease, and smoke, he will have no difficulty in discovering attractive traits in the Laplanders. Mr. Du Chaillu and Mr. Rae have lately made great friends with them, and are warm in praise of their honesty, gentleness, and intelligence.

The Russian Lapp is officially classed as a Russian Churchman. Soon after Martha, the *possadna* of Novgorod, founded Kem, Novgorodian bands expelled the Norsemen from what is now Russian Lapland, and ere long began, by their own forcible weapons of argument, to recommend their religion to the heathen natives. A small monastery—that of Boris-ogleb—was planted on the west bank of the Pasvig, where it still exists, a.

minute but precious excrescence of a great empire. The Lapp faith, though purer than that of their Samoyede brethren, is still largely and curiously mixed up with their ancient idolatrous rites. The worship of Yumala is not quite extinct; in the northern lights, often witnessed with great splendour in these latitudes, the wavering conflict of the spirits of the air is seen—the portent of dire calamity; the Prince of Evil is still a secret power, though reindeer are no longer sacrificed to him. There is an awful and mystic significance in the enclosures, formed of birch and fir boughs, which the Lapps, like some of the Finn peoples on the Volga, set apart in honour of the old gods.

The Lapps have not quite forgotten the practice of the "black arts" for which they were once famed and feared throughout Europe. Foul weather, instead of having its origin in America or in the Atlantic, according to some modern notions, was then believed to be brewed in Lapland by the devilish charms of "secret black and midnight hags," whose shapes, as they rode through the air maliciously rejoicing in the havoc they had let loose, could often be dimly discerned by the superstitious scudding through the rack of storm-clouds or whirling snowflakes. A great place of gathering of these wizards, or *noaïds*, was the Sviatoi Nos (Holy Cape), near where Willoughby and his men perished. Here, at the turning-point of many a voyage, they practised their incantations, with aid of the magic drum and libations of reindeer blood, and made a good profit by selling a "capful" of fair wind to English sailors bound to the White Sea.

The witches and wizards of Lapland now-a-days are much more humble and restricted in their field of opera-

tions. Their most potent charms are only employed to spoil a neighbour's fishing, to lame his pet reindeer, or to cast upon himself and his family the "evil eye." These supposed powers, however, give to the "magicians" among the Lapps, as among the Samoyedes, a considerable influence; and the Russians, Norwegians, Swedes, and Finlanders dwelling in their vicinity are by no means free of the infectious dread that they inspire. If the Lapp no longer scours through the clouds on a broomstick, he has other means of progression in the winter-time that are almost as unfamiliar to the experiences of more southern climes. On foot, on his *skids* or snow-skates, six feet in length, the Laplander skims the snow-covered surface of the lake, or darts down the frozen slopes, with the rapidity and agility of a swallow on the wing. Seated in his light reindeer-sleigh, and muffled up to the eyes in fur as a defence against the intense cold, he makes long journeys across the icy waste with speed and safety, managing his "horned steel" with admirable skill and address.

Their language and many physical traits and customs show that the Laplanders are allied to the neighbouring population of Finland. The two peoples indeed so blend into each other, through intermarriage and gradual approximation of pursuits, that it is not easy to draw a line of demarcation between Finland and Lapland; and the opinion has been hazarded that the Lopari, as the Russians style them, are simply the northern section of the Finnish people who have been squeezed "out into the cold" by the pressure of stronger races from the south. Their rigorous climate and their isolation would explain their diminutive stature and the backwardness

of their condition. They are Finns in spite of their stature, just as the dwarf-birch of their heaths is a birch in spite of its stunted growth and gnarled and twisted stem.

It is not necessary to enter into a full description of Finland and the past history and present condition of its people. Like Poland, though part of the Czar's European dominions, it is outside of Russia. It has its peculiar language, religion, and nationality, all presenting strong marks of contrast to the prevalent Russian type; and it has a separate organization and special laws.

The Finns of Finland are not like their kin on the Volga, surrounded on all sides by a Slav population, which is gradually absorbing and "Russifying" them. Only within the present century has the country been united to the empire; and on any disruption of the autocratic power Finland would be at least as likely to try to join itself to a neighbouring nation, or form itself into a separate state, as to willingly take part in a new reorganization of Russia. It has received its Lutheran faith and its civilization from Sweden. A large infusion of the population, especially on the sea-coast, are of Scandinavian descent. The language, the customs, the national character and sympathies, have been essentially modified by contact and old association with Sweden; and the aspirations of an intelligent people naturally turn towards a constitutional monarchy rather than a despotism, however "benevolent." Education has made considerable progress; and until within the last two or three generations Finland and Sweden had a "common fund" of literary as well as of military glory.

Too scattered and weak a nation to be able to maintain their independence in the gigantic struggles between the two great northern powers that lay on either side of them, the Finlanders showed themselves, under the banner of Charles the Twelfth, and in more recent conflicts as soldiers of the Czar, possessed of splendid soldierly qualities. Intellectually, too, they have shown that they need not be ashamed of a comparison with other northern peoples; and recently a vigorous "Young Finland" school has arisen that has assiduously explored the rich stores of Finnish poetry and folklore, and has raised the native language to the dignity of being one of the literary tongues of Europe. In no part of the dominions of the Czar are the people more fit for self-government, and nowhere could that experiment, which cannot be much longer delayed, be tried with better prospects of success.

The inhabitants, numbering some two million in a territory of one hundred and forty-four thousand square miles, are an intelligent, hard-working race of agriculturists and fishermen, simple and frugal in their habits, though rather fond, like other northern peoples, of strong spirits, and presenting in many features of their character and daily life marked resemblances to the Swedes, with whom they were so long politically united. This resemblance, as might be expected, is most observable in the western districts, especially along the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia, where the tidy little villages lining the shores of the fiords, with their quaint wooden houses, the modest Protestant church, the troops of school children, the alertness, intelligence, and homely courtesy of the inhabitants, their costume and often their



dialect, might make a visitor fancy that he was sojourning in Scandinavia rather than in Russia.

As the traveller proceeds eastward and approaches St. Petersburg, a change, not for the better, is perceptible. The symptoms of taste and contrivance fade from the exterior of the dwellings, and comfort from their interiors; the tokens of brain and industry having been at work in the cultivation of the thin sandy soil, the draining of the marshes, and the clearing away of trees and boulders, become less evident; dirt accumulates in the streets; beards, boots, and overcoats grow in dimensions, and the natives become more fawning and subservient in manner, while losing the frank, hearty hospitality of their western kin, until at length we reach the old familiar dead-level of the Russian village.

Not only are these eastern districts of Finland, comprehended in the province of Viborg, and partly incorporated in the governments of St. Petersburg and Olonetz, more exposed to Russian influences by reason of their situation, but they have been much longer under the rule of Russia than the other portions of the Grand Duchy. They formed part of the extensive dominions on the eastern and southern side of the Baltic conquered by the great heroes of Swedish history, from Torquil Knutson in the thirteenth century down to Charles the Twelfth. These embraced not merely what is now known as Finland, but Ingermanland—the isthmus between Lake Ladoga and the Gulf of Finland, on which the Russian capital now stands—the “Baltic provinces” of Esthonia and Livonia, and Pomerania; in fact, the Baltic was a Swedish lake.

Many were the battles, the sieges, the doughty deeds

by sea and land, that were accomplished before these spoils were won for Sweden ; and then the most martial and intrepid of her sons, grasping at still wider conquests, lost the choicest of those that had already been secured. In the course of less than a century Sweden was deprived of all her hard-won possessions to the east of her present boundary, the river Tornea. The Peace of Nystadt in 1721 secured for Russia the province of Viborg and her conquests in Ingria and Esthonia ; the Peace of Abo, twenty-two years later, gave her another slice of Finland ; while by the Peace of Fredrikshamm, in 1809, the rest of the Grand Duchy, with the Aland Islands, was absorbed by the Empire.

While the jagged and broken coast of Finland, with its deep firths, still reaches of enclosed water, storm-chafed capes, and innumerable outlying islands and rocks—what in Scotland are called *skerries*—resemble on a diminished scale the Atlantic coast-line of Norway, the interior of the country has nothing corresponding to the great mountain backbone of the Scandinavian peninsula. There are some ranges of low hills in the centre of the country which form the nucleus of its drainage system, but the general character of the surface is flat or gently undulating. Forests of fir and larch, far-stretching fens, heaths, and sandy barrens, huge lichen-covered boulders that have floated thither in the Ice Age, at long intervals a patch of cultivation and a human habitation, and in the less sparsely inhabited parts traces here and there of what may by courtesy be called a road, make up the characteristic scenery of Finland. But if, even in the cheerful spring season, there are suggestions of loneliness and sadness in the aspect of their native land,

this only endears it the more to the hearts of its loyal children.

Chief, however, among the natural features of Finland are its lakes. Indeed, no country in the Old World is so abundantly, so superfluously supplied with fresh-water reservoirs. Any one who glances at a map of the Grand Duchy cannot help being struck by the bewildering distribution of earth and water, the lace-like pattern of the multitudinous peninsulas, isthmuses, and islands that represent the solid land, and the fantastic filigree work of lakes, rivers, and fens covering thousands of square miles of surface. This part of Finland looks more like a great lake that has got entangled, as in a net, among an infinite number of fine threads of land, than an ordinary piece of *terra firma*. If it is puzzling on the map, what must it be in actual travelling experience! How is one to make a cross-country march over this "crude consistence" of moist and dry, unless he is provided with the travelling apparatus of Milton's fiend, who

"O'er bog or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or rare,  
With head, hands, wings, or feet pursues his way,  
And swims or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies"?

Fortunately the dwellers in those parts have long ago discovered the shortest and easiest cuts through this labyrinth of lake and land; and in former times these morasses and islands protected Finland's independence, as the fens of Ely preserved the last liberties of the Saxons. Strong places were established at the fords, at the narrows between lake and lake, and on islands that had easy communication between either shore. Roads have been constructed, and causeways and bridges built, so that with water on either side of him for a

great part of the route, the traveller can traverse the country from north to south or from east to west with little interruption.

Apart, however, from the railway line that now crosses Finland, almost the only route familiar to tourists is that which follows the coast, past the chief towns of historical and commercial note—Nystadt; Abo, the old capital; Helsingfors, the new seat of administration and learning, defended by the strong fortress of Sveaborg, bombarded by the Allies in 1855; Lovisa; Fredrikshamm; and Viborg—to St. Petersburg. On this journey we cross the Saima Canal, which connects the lake of that name with the Gulf of Finland, while the river Saima unites the lake with the greater reservoir of Lake Ladoga.

Lake Saima presents all the features of the Finland meres on an exaggerated scale. Low islands are scattered over every part of its surface; long tongues of land pierce it to the centre from every side; still longer and curiously intricate branches and channels join it to other great ponds of exactly similar design—Orevesi, Kuopio, Pielisjarvi, and others—and altogether this Briareus of lakes might perhaps compete with any other body of fresh water in length of coast-line. By canal and river Lake Saima is connected with the two “keys” of Finland—Viborg, by the salt waters of the Gulf of Finland, and Kexholm, on an island of Lake Ladoga—of which Peter the Great possessed himself in 1710, when, having planted his feet firmly on the isthmus of Ingria, and laid the foundations of the future capital, he began his conquests on the Grand Duchy.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### ST. PETERSBURG.



THE shores of Lake Ladoga are still, for the most part, girt with swamp and forest. The clearings are partial and widely scattered, the population is sparse, and the woods are dense and tall. Much commerce, it is true, passes through the lake, and there are thriving communities of fishermen, lumbermen, pitch-distillers, and agriculturists. But it is of vast extent—indeed, the largest collection of fresh water in Europe; and its fleets of barges, rafts, and sailing craft make but a small figure in the wide vista of waters enclosed in the dark frame of pine-forest.

The climate is rude and boreal, and the soil generally sandy or marshy. There are few sites suitable for patrician towers or the villa residences of rich city merchants. It is a semi-arctic lake and a semi-arctic landscape, and few would suspect that not many miles from these sombre shores stands one of the richest, gayest, and most magnificent of European capitals, the metropolis of the most extensive of modern empires.

Yet little more than a century and a half ago the banks of the Neva were as lonely and desolate as the most sequestered nooks of Ladoga are to-day. The dismantled

little Swedish fort of Nienschantz stood on the north bank of the Neva, where it discharges itself by several mouths into the Gulf of Finland. A few wretched fishers' cabins were scattered over the islands and along the margin of the stream on the sites now occupied by the palaces of St. Petersburg. At the outlet of the river from Lake Ladoga was the fortified island of Noteburg, or Orekhovo (the "Nut"),—"a hard nut to crack," Peter wrote,—which had just been captured from the Swedes, and re-named by the Czar, Schlüsselburg—the "Key Fortress."

All else was morass and forest. The situation had, however, decided natural advantages, counterbalancing no less obvious defects. The river which flows out of Lake Ladoga, though insignificant in length—only some forty miles—is one of the first in Europe in its great breadth and volume and in the depth and limpidity of its current. Nature itself had already partially formed waterways, which could, with some aid from art, connect the Neva with Novgorod, with Moscow, with Archangel, and with the interior of Finland.

Peter the Great, casting his eagle glance around his dominions, his busy brain filled with the most far-reaching schemes of ambition, and his mind fixed, especially, on the design of making Russia a great commercial and maritime power, with a leading voice in the councils of Europe, marked and appreciated the commanding position offered by the Neva. He determined,—and with him to will and to execute were one,—that here he would build the future seat of imperial government, the Northern Rome, the "eye" by which Russia should look out upon European affairs, and the portal by which the riches, the

arts, and the civilization of the West should enter into the rude heart of Muscovy. The obstacles to his designs were such as would have appalled a less powerful intellect and less iron will. The soil had only lately been conquered by Russia from the Swedes; the two powerful northern nations were still grappling fiercely for its possession. The site was low, marshy, and unhealthy, and subject to periodic inundation. The climate was of Arctic rigour, and the country around desolated by war and incapable of productive cultivation. Russian prejudices and national feelings were passionately opposed to the removal of the Czar from his old capital; and the nations of Europe were jealous of this strange half-wild figure from the East that suddenly appeared in their midst and claimed to be of their company. Peter's savage impetuosity overcame all obstacles.

In May 1703, the first stakes were driven of a bastion which was constructed on an island of the Neva, afterwards called Petersburg, opposite the site where the imperial palace now stands. Here the beginnings were formed of the present citadel, and a small wooden church dedicated to St. Peter and St. Paul arose. A portion of the army was first employed in the labour of founding the capital; but afterwards no fewer than forty thousand Finnish and Russian peasants were drafted into the work of draining, pile-driving, digging, and building. Streets of wooden houses began to line the river, and broad avenues were cut extending back into the marsh and forest; for the new city was not to be after the old, filthy, confined, and irregular type, but to be the model of symmetry as well as the crown of grandeur for the rest of the empire.

Little by little trade and population came and took root. Foreign vessels arrived at the new port formed at Cronstadt, and at the wharves on the Neva, the first arrival curiously enough being a Dutch ship freighted by Peter's old friend Cornelius Kalf of Zaandam, where the Czar had worked as a journeyman carpenter. Extraordinary inducements were held out to the nobles, merchants, and artisans to settle at St. Petersburg. Where these failed, recourse was had to compulsory measures. Every vessel arriving at the port, whether barge from the northern lakes, or merchant ship from the high seas, was bound to bring a certain quantity of stones, brick, or gravel to strengthen the unstable foundations of the city, to form streets, and to build new edifices of granite. Nay, to draw masons thither, a ukase was issued forbidding the erection of buildings of stone in any other town of the empire. The first rude draft, as it were, of the Czar's ambitious plan—the unpaved miry streets, lined by squalid shanties, and the churches, palaces, and fortresses of wood—began to be transformed into a stately structure of more durable material.

During the early period of its history a perfect tempest of war beat around the young community. Peter was assailed by the united military strength of Sweden and Poland, led by the great captain of his time, Charles XII., and was frequently, nay, almost constantly, worsted. The whole of his resources were needed to withstand the ungovernable rage of the Swede; and there was rebellion, open or smouldering, throughout his own dominions. But he never relaxed from his purpose to found a great port and capital on the Neva. At every breathing-space in the struggle he returned to the



prosecution of his inflexible design ; and when at last his arch-enemy was overthrown, and the tide of battle rolled northwards into Finland, he was able to devote himself with renewed energy to the task. Fires wasted the budding capital. When a strong easterly wind blew, driving the waters of Ladoga into the channel of the Neva, the river rose, inundating and devastating the newly-formed streets. Owing to the low and marshy situation, epidemics were frequent and fatal. The variations of temperature were so rapid and excessive that the Russian courtiers, inured to extremes of cold and heat as they were, grumbled at being compelled to live in a city more hyperborean in latitude and climate even than Stockholm.

Peter was inexorable to the obstacles of nature and to the complaints of his subjects. He did not spare others, but he spared himself least of all. When the work of founding the city began, he built for himself a small cottage of wood, which may still be seen by the curious, on the river bank over against the splendid Winter Palace. Here, says Rambaud, Peter installed himself, and superintended the growth of the infant capital, "sometimes piloting with his own hands the first Dutch ships that ventured into these waters, sometimes giving chase to the Swedish vessels which came to insult him. He decorated the church of the fortress with carvings of ivory, the work of his own hands, hung it with flags conquered from the Swedes, and consecrated there his little boat, 'ancestor of the Russian fleet ;' and, breaking through the tradition that insisted on the princes being buried in St. Michael at Moscow, chose out in St. Peter and St. Paul his own tomb and that of his successors."

There was a singular appropriateness in the manner of Peter's death, from the effects of a chill caught by flinging himself into the ice-cold waters of the Neva to save a boat in distress. When the great Czar was gone, it seemed at first doubtful whether his successors would carry out his wishes with regard to St. Petersburg, and its fate long hung trembling in the balance. But Catherine II., a princess scarcely inferior to Peter in ambition and strength of character, thoroughly understood and sympathized with his great plans; and since her time the growth of the capital in population, riches, and magnificence has been almost unchecked.

Let us now approach St. Petersburg, not from the side of Ladoga and the frozen wastes of the north, but from the side of the Baltic, and examine what manner of city this is that, in the space of a hundred and eighty years, has arisen out of a desolate marsh to be the worthy capital of a great military empire. First, there heave in sight the frowning bastions, the forest of masts, and the painted spires of Cronstadt, the port and defence of St. Petersburg—the eyelid, it might be called, that guards the “eye” of Russia from harm. The sights and sounds of Cronstadt are all suggestive of military, naval, and commercial life. A very large proportion of the forty thousand inhabitants consists of the garrison. In the busy “open” season, between May and November, the docks are crowded with shipping, the quays encumbered with merchandise, and the throngs of people in the streets are cosmopolitan rather than specially Russian.

A brief sail brings us to the mouths of the Neva and the first houses of the capital. As has already been indicated, the Neva, about the centre of St. Petersburg,

breaks up into several channels. The first of these to leave the main stream is the Nevka, which branches off on the right, and itself splits up into the Great and the Little Nevka. The main body of the river also separates itself lower down into the Great and Little Neva, and between these principal streams there are subsidiary channels, forming a series of islands, great and small. Chief among these islands are St. Petersburg, where the city had its first beginnings, surrounded by the waters of the Neva and the Great and Little Nevka, and Vassili Ostrog, between the Great and Little Neva.

On these islands, and on the north bank of the stream, the older buildings of St. Petersburg arose; but for a long period the mass of the population has shifted with the court to the southern bank. Here there are further subdivisions of water, by means of four lines of canals, so that altogether, within the city boundaries, we find some fourteen water-courses, a lake, eight canals, and nineteen islands. Like Venice or Amsterdam, therefore, St. Petersburg is an amphibious city; only, her walls are washed by the fresh rushing waters of the majestic Neva, instead of by the salt sea. The Neva is the pride of the Russian capital and the greatest of all its sights. It is no dead, muddy, evil-smelling ditch, like the Thames at London or the Seine at Paris, but a broad, clear, and powerful stream that looks worthy of its mission as the highway of commerce and the seat of empire. Its breadth opposite the Winter Palace, where it is crossed by a bridge of boats, is about three quarters of a mile, while its depth in its lower channels is fifty feet.

St. Petersburg may claim, equally with the "Queen of the Adriatic," with which it has so often been compared and contrasted, the title of the City of Palaces. No other capital has so many royal and princely residences. In none have the situation, the grouping, and architectural features of the buildings been so studiously arranged, so as to produce an imposing and magnificent scenic effect. As the Neva is the glory of St. Petersburg, so the city turns all its beauties towards the river, and views them reflected in its waters. Every bend of the stream reveals a *coup d'œil* which it seems impossible to rival, until a little farther on a new vista is opened up of lofty palace fronts, adorned by Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian columns surmounted by massive friezes, entablatures, and sculptured groups; temples of Byzantine, Grecian, or Gothic design, overtopped by swelling cupolas in green and gold, stiletto-like spires, or vast square towers; endless ranges of public and private buildings, monuments, warehouses, and docks, with quays thronged with passengers and vehicles; spacious and splendid streets, stretching away in far perspective for two or three miles; gardens and boulevards, relieving with their fresh green foliage the uniformity of lines and colour in the masses of stone-work; and broad canals and channels branching off to the right and left. And in the midst of all, giving an air of space, freedom, and dignity to the whole scene, flows the wide stream of the Neva, thronged by craft of all kinds and sizes, from the tiny gondola to the man-of-war, and from the rude barge, laden with timber, grain, or flax from the Volga, to the largest class of sea-going merchant ships.

Ascending the channel of the Great Neva, we have on the left the stately fronts of the School of Mines, the School of Marine Cadets, the Academy of Arts, the Observatory, and the Academy of Sciences, lining the river wall of Vassili Ostrog (Basil's Island); while on the right, or southern side, are docks and admiralty yards, succeeded by the handsome range of churches, hotels, places of business, and residences of merchant princes known as the English Quay. Nearly opposite to the Grecian portico of the Imperial Academy of Arts, and about the middle of the English Quay, is the celebrated Nicolas Bridge, where the only permanent roadway over the Great Neva is carried across the river on eight colossal iron arches resting on piers of granite. The architect of this work, Stanislas Herbedze, had to contend not only with a stream of great width, depth, and strength of current, but with a shifting bottom and marshy soil, and to guard against dangers from floods and ice. Its successful completion, after fifteen years' labour, is one of the triumphs of engineering. Higher up are the Palace, the Troitski, and Liteinoi floating bridges. The second of these, extending from opposite the military parade-ground of the "Czar's Meadow" across the broadest part of the Neva to the fortress on the island of St. Petersburg, is three-quarters of a mile in length.

It is between the Nicolas and Troitski Bridges, and particularly at the point where the river separates itself into the channels of the Great and Little Neva, that the principal buildings of the capital are grouped, and the finest pictorial and architectural effects are found. Isaac's Place is the "Place of St. Mark" of St. Petersburg — the centre of interest, the starting-point from

which the sightseer naturally begins his exploration of the city marvels, and probably the goal to which he returns at the close of his day's labours. The spacious open square looks out upon the Neva with a frontage of some three hundred yards, and its farther end is closed by that stupendous mass of marble and bronze, the Cathedral of St. Isaac. On the margin of the river, half-way between the Senate House, which ends the line of the English Quay, and the Admiralty, is the celebrated equestrian statue of Peter the Great.

This most famous of the monuments of St. Petersburg was executed by the orders of Catherine II., and was the work of a French sculptor, Falconet. Peter, astride a mighty charger, is represented as reining his steed back upon its haunches on the brink of a precipice, while he stretches his sceptre over the river, and seems to survey with proud triumph the wonderful growth of the city of which he is the "posthumous creator," while underneath the horse's feet writhes a serpent, emblematic of the difficulties that were encountered and overcome in founding a capital on a quaking bog. The statue is of bronze, and of colossal size, the horse being seventeen feet in height and the rider eleven feet. It stands upon a pedestal formed of a block of granite weighing fifteen hundred tons, and transported with infinite labour from the neighbouring plains of Finland. An error of taste has been committed in smoothing and planing away the natural angles of the rock, and shaping the rough boulder into a conventional form altogether inappropriate to the symbolic meaning of the monument and to the rude herculean task that it commemorates; but the attitude and expression of the great Czar, the spirited action of the charger, and

the general idea and effect of the whole group, are worthy of the subject and of the site.

After all, Isaac's Place is only a slice of a much larger open space in the heart of the city—the Admiralty Square. In the centre of this grand square is the Admiralty building itself, one of the largest and most notable edifices in the Russian capital. The front of the Admiralty, facing the south, is a third of a mile in length, and the two wings, stretching to the margin of the Neva, are each six hundred and fifty feet. Enclosed between these wings, and extending along the river bank, are the Government dockyards, where vessels of the Russian navy are constructed, with slips, wharves, moulding and engine sheds, anchor and cordage stores, blacksmiths', carpenters', and joiners' sheds, and all the other necessary apparatus for an establishment of the kind ; while the vast building itself contains the offices of the naval department of the Government, with a museum in which are conserved the many objects of interest connected with the maritime history of the empire. Formerly the Admiralty was enclosed by a moat and ramparts, but the place of these is now occupied by a shady line of boulevards. The chief entrance in the south front is through a grand archway, on either side of which are gigantic representations of the terrestrial and celestial globes, and overhead frescoes emblematic of Russia's naval power. Above rises a square tower, supported by columns ; and surmounting this are the lantern, and the tall, slender, richly-gilt spire which forms one of the most prominent features in a general view of St. Petersburg, from whatever side it is surveyed.

Opposite the Admiralty is a crescent of lofty build-

ings of uniform architecture, and pierced in the centre by a colossal archway,—the Foreign Office of Russia; while separated from it by an open space corresponding to Isaac's Place, and standing on the quay of the Neva, is the Winter Palace, the official town residence of the emperors.

In the buildings grouped around and within this square—in the Winter Palace, the Senate, the Foreign Office, the War Office, the Synod, and the Admiralty—are concentrated almost the whole of the vast and complicated machinery by which the executive government of Russia is carried on. The mainspring of the whole is within the palace itself, centred in the person of the Autocrat, the sole source of initiative action in legislative, judicial, and administrative affairs, as well as of honours and dignities. The vehicle of the Emperor's will is his "Private Cabinet," the various sections of which direct the executive government and the making and promulgation of the law, the control of the army and police, and the conduct of educational and ecclesiastical affairs. The actual functions of government are intrusted to four great Boards—the Council of the Empire, with its three great departments having the superintendence of legislation, civil administration, and finance respectively; the Directing Senate—or *Prawitelstwujuschtschi Senat*, if any one cares to have its official title—whose committees sit both at St. Petersburg and at Moscow, and whose duties are partly executive and partly deliberative, while it is a court of last resort in certain judicial cases; the Holy Synod, composed of the dignitaries of the Church, and having control of the religious affairs of the empire; and, lastly, the Council of Ministers, divided into eleven



departments—to wit, the Imperial Household, Foreign Affairs, War, Navy, Interior, Public Instruction, Finance, Justice, Imperial Domains, Public Works, and General Control.

Subordinate to this central authority are the various local governments of the fourteen viceroyalties, fifty-one governments, and three hundred and twenty districts into which the empire is subdivided, each elaborately organized, and many of them regulated by special laws and constitutions. It would occupy a large volume to describe adequately in detail the functions and relations of this enormous and intricate machine, which, in theory at least, unites the vast resources and strength of Russia, her army of three millions of men, her powerful navy, the still more influential moral force of the Church, and the whole organization of civil life from the highest officer of state to the humblest member of the village “mir,” and places them in the hands of one man, for the expression of his will over ninety millions of people. It is the less necessary to enter into the subject, as bureaucracy has probably seen its best days in Russia. The apparatus—as was only to be looked for—in spite of theoretic perfection, is rusty in part, in others defective, and in not a few respects an instrument of oppression. It is constantly being altered in details; and probably will soon have to be altered in essentials, if the dangers threatened from a people who have had so much of officialism that they are growing sick of order itself are to be avoided.

A voluminous work also might be written—many books, indeed, have been written—on the court ceremonies and etiquette and the manner of life within the charmed

circle of fashion of which the imperial family is the centre, and which, like the Government, are systematized and regulated in the minutest details. It will be more profitable and interesting perhaps to say something instead of the Winter Palace itself. The site of the official residence of the emperors was originally occupied by a house belonging to Count Apraxin, Peter's high admiral, who first taught the Russians to conquer at sea. The Empress Anne first took up her town residence here; and in 1762 it was rebuilt, under the direction of the Empress Catherine, after a design by Count Rastrelli. In 1837 it was burned to the ground; but two years later it had risen in its present magnificent form.

The structure, which is rich and ornate, even to heaviness, in its style of architecture, is four stories in height, and stands proudly apart from the other buildings on the Great Quay of the Neva, from whence a grand flight of marble steps leads up to the principal entrance. The frontage to the river is four hundred and fifty-five feet, and that facing the Admiralty three hundred and fifty feet. Who shall describe with appropriate elaboration the glories of the clusters of Ionic and Corinthian columns and pilasters, the richly-carved capitals and entablatures, the ornamented architraves, flowers, festoons, and arabesques, the corniced and pedimented windows, and balustraded roof surmounted by vases and statues? Whatever fault may be found with the style—and public buildings of St. Petersburg, like those of some other capitals, are by no means free of the reproach of meretriciousness—there can be no question of the imposing general effect, and the situation of the building is one of the finest in Europe. The interior

of the palace is furnished and embellished in the most sumptuous style. The whole resources of the art of the carver, decorator, and upholsterer have been expended on it; and the higher branches of art, painting and sculpture, are worthily represented.

The visitor is led through a maze of banqueting-halls, drawing-rooms, audience-chambers, corridors, and galleries, and up and down magnificent flights of stairs, until he gets bewildered by the blaze of gilt and bronze, the columns of marble and porphyry, the gorgeous draperies, carpets, and mosaics, the huge mirrors and candelabra, the richly-carved cornices and painted ceilings, and the thousand and one rare and precious works of art that have here been gathered together. In the lower story alone there are nearly a hundred principal rooms, and the area of the different apartments is not less than four hundred thousand square feet. The most famous among the rooms in the Winter Palace are the great banqueting-hall, which measures one hundred and eighty-nine feet in length by one hundred and ten in breadth; the hall of St. George, a still more magnificently decorated apartment, in which the chapter of the military order named after the popular saint of Russia is held; the white hall; the throne-room; the gallery of field-marshal; and the portrait-gallery; and the curious may see the crown jewels of Russia, and many other objects of artistic and historical interest.

Most people, however, will choose to devote more time to the splendid collection of paintings—one of the most extensive and precious in the world—in the adjoining picture-galleries, museums, and libraries of the Hermitage Palaces, than to an exploration of the wonders

of the Imperial Palace. Here, by the care and public spirit of successive emperors, have been gathered examples of all the great schools of painting, including a large representation of the great names in English art. The Great and Little Hermitage and the Hermitage Theatre are connected with each other and with the Winter Palace by covered galleries, and, like the imperial residence, are ranged along the Grand Quay of the Neva, to which they present a frontage of nearly eight hundred feet. If we add to this the Winter Palace itself, we have a continuous range of imperial palaces more than a third of an English mile in length, impressive in their vast size and stately proportions, enriched within and without with all that wealth could supply or taste suggest to please the fancy of generations of autocratic sovereigns, and bursting with all kinds of superb ornaments and costly furniture, and with still more priceless treasures of art, science, and literature—*chefs d'œuvre* of Raphael, Titian, and Correggio, of Greuse, Poussin, and Claude, of Rembrandt, Cuyp, and Paul Potter; statues in marble and bronze by the great sculptors of ancient and modern times; collections of engravings, jewellery, cameos, and antiquities of every kind, and a library containing many thousands of rare works on archæology, and manuscripts reaching back to the earliest beginning of Russian literature and history. The principal literary treasures of the Russian capital have, however, been removed to the Imperial Public Library, on the Nevski Prospect, where has been brought together one of the richest and most extensive collections of books in the world, embracing nearly a million of printed volumes.

The line of palaces on or near the Neva does not end with the Hermitage; for beyond it is the Marble Palace,

originally a present from the Empress Catherine to her favourite, Prince Orloff, and then behind the extensive lawns and shrubberies of the Summer Gardens are the Summer Palace, once occupied by Peter the Great; the quaint structure named the Castle of St. Michael, built by the Emperor Paul, and where he met with his tragic death; and the magnificent modern Michael Palace, close to the walls of which the late Emperor fell, shattered by a Nihilist bomb, as he was about to enter his carriage. Higher up the river we find the Taurida Palace, surrounded by extensive grounds, the gift of Catherine to another of her numerous favourites, the celebrated Marshal Potemkin, and now reserved for dowagers of the imperial family, while members of the reigning house have their residences scattered through other parts of the city.

On this southern side of the Neva also are two far-famed monastic piles that are palatial in their extent and splendour—the Smolnoi Church and Convent, with the attached institutions for the education of ladies of noble birth and of the daughters of simple citizens, and the Monastery of St. Alexander Nevski. The Smolnoi Church is of white marble, and surmounting it are five domes of blue, blazing with golden stars. The Nevski Monastery ranks next after those at Kiev and at Troitsa near Moscow, in precedence, sanctity, and importance, and, like the other two mentioned, is the seat of a metropolitan. Here, in their shrine of solid silver, rest the bones of the canonized Grand Duke Alexander, the conqueror of the Tchuds on Lake Peipus, and of the Swedes on the Neva, who had afterwards to bend his neck under the foot of the Tartar Khans.

Alexander Nevski is a saint in high repute on the banks of the Neva, where a political as well as a religious purpose is fulfilled by keeping up the memory of his exploits; and many are the rich gifts that have been brought hither to enrich his shrine and the church that contains it by successive emperors, princes, priests, envoys, and courtiers. Within the precincts of St. Alexander Nevski some of the greatest and noblest of Russia's sons are buried: it is the Westminster Abbey, the Père-la-Chaise of St. Petersburg. In a small side chapel in the Church of the Annunciation are the tombs of the Naryshkin family, the kin of Peter the First, and near by are the monuments of the celebrated generals Suvaroff, Rumiantsof, and Miloradovitch. In the adjoining cemetery a white marble column rises to the memory of Lomonosof, the father of Russian poetry—a sign of the uprising of a new literature, and that a higher and grander fame than can be won in war is receiving the recognition of the nation.

The most notable of the ecclesiastical edifices of St. Petersburg, however, is the new Church of St. Isaac the Dalmatian in Isaac Place. Surrounded on every side by colossal and splendid public buildings, this “mountain of bronze and granite” seems, by its vast bulk and height, to fill the greatest space in the eye while taking a panoramic glance over the Russian capital. There was a church on this spot in Peter's time, which Catherine afterwards caused to be reconstructed of marble; but the present magnificent building, which occupied nearly forty years in construction, owes its existence to the munificence of the Emperors Alexander I. and Nicolas. Like that of most Russian

churches, the ground plan forms a Greek cross. The length is three hundred and forty feet, and the breadth three hundred feet. The architect, M. Montferrand, has sought to attain his effects by the grand simplicity of the lines combined with the stupendous magnitude of the scale and the richness of the materials of the building. The great central dome surmounts four grand porticos, forming the entrances to the church. Access to these is obtained by four broad flights of steps, each step composed of a single block of granite. The two principal porticos are supported by sixteen polished granite columns of the Corinthian order, each hewn from the solid rock, while the side porticos have eight columns each. These gigantic monolithic pillars are sixty feet in height and seven feet in diameter; and they are set on bronze pedestals, and crowned by massive capitals of bronze and friezes of fire-polished stone. High above this rises the great central cupola, a vast burnished dome of copper, resting on a peristyle of thirty columns; and above it, "like a chapel on a hill-top," the rotunda, bearing aloft, at a height of three hundred and seventeen feet from the ground, the golden cross that is one of the great "landmarks" of the stranger in the city. Two smaller domes, similar in design to the main cupola, surmount each of the two principal porticos.

All the resources that the Russian genius and religious feeling can employ have been lavished on the interior of this great fane of the Orthodox faith; but with so much yet to describe, we must not linger over marble pavements and richly-gilded roofs, the paintings and carvings, the precious shrines, screens, and

altar furniture, and the pillars of malachite, lapis-lazuli, and porphyry, that may be seen by the curious or the devout in St. Isaac's. Before leaving its neighbourhood, however, mention may be made of a work by the same architect that stands not far off, in the Admiralty Square. This is the Alexander Column, a single shaft of red Finland granite, eighty-four feet in height and fourteen feet in diameter, and the largest monolithic monument of modern times. The base consists of another huge block of granite twenty-five feet in height; while the capital, which is surmounted by a winged figure of Hope, consists of bronze smelted down from Turkish cannons captured by the generals of Alexander I., in whose honour the column has been erected.

Beyond the Neva, and opposite to the Hermitage Palace, is a church of more venerable and interesting associations than have yet gathered round St. Isaac's—the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul. Its slender, needle-like spire alone, shooting up into the air to the height of three hundred and eighty-seven feet, will not allow the visitor to St. Petersburg to pass it by unnoticed. It is the highest pinnacle in the capital, and almost in Russia, surpassing considerably in altitude the spire of the Admiralty and the cross of St. Isaac's, the two city landmarks that dispute with it for pre-eminence. Beneath this conspicuous monument, that, seen above the sea of buildings, looks more like "the mast of some great admiral" than a structure of stone, rests the dust of the great founder of the city, and grouped around, as he had decreed, are the tombs of his successors on the throne of Russia. The walls of the church are covered with trophies won in wars



against Prussian and Austrian, Frenchman, Swede, and Turk, each marking a step in an astounding career of conquest and aggrandizement. The building itself is encircled by the strong walls and bastions of the fortress of St. Petersburg, where the first germ of the capital was planted. In the rear, a few hundred yards off, the small wooden cottage where Peter laboured and thought still stands entire. Opposite, beyond the broad Neva, and athwart its ascending and descending streams of trading and pleasure craft, is seen the stately line of palaces where his descendants, the heirs of one of the most extensive empires known in history, live surrounded by treasures of art and taste undreamed of in the Russia of a century and a half ago. On Vassili Island, beyond another wide reach of water on the right, at the parting of the Great and Little Neva, is the wide and open space on which stand the Exchange, where crowds of merchants do daily congregate, the busy docks, Custom House, and old and new bazaars, the Academy of Sciences, and the long line of the University front; while on the left, across the Great Nevka, and on the north bank of the main river, are the arsenals, graving-docks, shipbuilding yards, manufactories, and workmen's quarters, and all the signs of the industrial activity and naval power of Russia. Truly, so far at least as the choice of the great Czar's last resting-place is concerned,—

“After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well.”

It was in this fortress, now used as a state prison, that the Czarevitch Alexis, the only son of Peter that reached man's estate, died under the knout, as the

punishment of his insubordinate opposition to his father's reforms. There are few of the imperial residences that do not contain some such ugly skeleton in the closet as a witness of the terrible penalties that wait upon greatness. Peter's granddaughter, the Princess Tarakanof, was drowned in one of the dungeons of the fortress by the overflowing of the Neva. His grandson, Peter III., was done to death at Rapcha, near Peterhof, "a secluded spot, but very pleasant," to make a way to the throne for his ambitious wife, the Empress Catherine II. Ivan VI. died under the hands of assassins, after having been bereft of reason by his long confinement in the fortress of Schlüsselburg, from the cradle to the age of twenty-one. Catherine's son, the Emperor Paul, great-grandfather of the present Czar, was murdered under circumstances of peculiar atrocity in the sumptuous new palace he had reared for himself, while his eldest son, afterwards Alexander I., lay trembling and listening to the progress of the bloody work in the room above.

The stately courts and halls of the Winter Palace itself have seen their share of tragic incidents. From the front of it the Emperor Nicolas harangued the rebel soldiers of the Guards, in the "December Insurrection" that marked his accession to the throne. The conspirators who raised the standard of revolt in the name of the Czar's elder brother Constantine, who had renounced the succession for the love of the Polish lady whom he married, shot down the governor of the capital, Miloradovitch, "the hero of fifty-two battles," in the Place du Senat, massacred some of their officers, and fired on the metropolitan, and were only scattered by repeated rounds of ball-cartridge.

Perhaps the most startling event, however, in the history of the Winter Palace is the recent diabolical attempt to blow up the imperial family with dynamite stored under the state dining-room. Little more than a year after—on the 13th March 1881—another and successful attempt on the life of the head of the Russian state closed for the present the long list of tragedies in the Romanoff family,—the scene of Alexander the Second's murder, however, being, as has been said, not the Winter Palace, but the public roadway skirting the Catherine Canal, near the Michael Palace.

Much might be said of the street sights and sounds and the domestic life of the Russian capital. Whole chapters might be written on the picturesque variety and startling contrasts in the types of manners, from the ultra-French polish and profuse display in the upper circles, to the extreme poverty and primitive simplicity of the lower ranks of citizens and the peasantry; of the trade, manufactures, and employments of the capital; of its official, scientific, literary, and artistic coteries; of the musical and theatrical representations that fill so large a space in the thoughts of St. Petersburg society; of the popular amusements and recreations—the winter sports on the Neva, the *montagnes russes* that do duty for the ice-hills in the milder seasons of the year, and the rude humours of the carnival; of the busy scenes to be witnessed in the markets; of droskies and diligences, with their befurred and shaggy-bearded drivers; of sledges and gondolas; of floating fairs and ice-festivals; and of the excessive solicitude with which a paternal government watches over all the pleasures and occupations of its children,

carrying espionage and supervision to lengths which, according to English notions at least, are intolerable.

For one desirous of studying Russian character and habits, no more profitable way of spending the time could be chosen than in visiting the numerous bazaars and markets in the city. In the Siennaia, or hay-market, he will find not hay alone, or chiefly, but poultry, flesh, and fish—frozen, dried, salted, and fresh; and all manner of vegetables, fruits, and other provisions are exposed for sale among an eager and gesticulating but good-humoured throng of buyers and sellers. It is, in fact, a combination of Billingsgate and Covent Garden, with features that are peculiarly Russian. The penalties of visiting these places of public resort are not to be measured only by the roubles and kopeks which the unwary stranger is wheedled into expending on the tempting wares exposed. Dr. Granville, an English traveller, who has given a most minute account of St. Petersburg as it was fifty years ago, describes a rag fair, where the humours of low Russian life may be studied, as a dense and unsavoury gathering of “hawkers, old clothesmen, sellers of kvass, sbitine (popular beverages), gingerbread, horse-flesh, and black cabbage soup, thick and nasty, of which the poorer people are fond,” and richly deserving, from the crowding and pushing, its nickname of *Tolkonchoi Rynok*—the Shoving-market. In all its main features the picture is true to-day.

The Great Bazaar of St. Petersburg—the Gostinnoi Dvor, or Strangers’ Market—is in the Nevski Prospect, at no great distance from the haymarket. The huge building is celled like a honeycomb with

shops, stalls, booths, and warerooms, in which goods of the most diverse and miscellaneous kinds, from the most rich and rare to the most coarse and common, are exposed for sale; and the streets, lanes, passages, and staircases are thronged with a swarm of purchasers more dense and more busy than bees in a hive. The business of the Gostinnoi Dvor has overflowed and invaded the neighbouring thoroughfares, which are lined with shops and stores in which generally merchandise of inferior descriptions are sold.

Of course no account of the Russian capital would be complete without something being said of its great promenade—the Nevski Prospect. Starting from the centre of the city in the Admiralty Place, this spacious street extends for a distance of some two miles, till it nearly reaches the Neva again at the Monastery of St. Alexander Nevski, thus cutting off from the rest of the city the most fashionable quarter and the imperial residences, round which the river sweeps in a wide curve. The Nevski Prospect is not throughout straight, being interrupted at about two-thirds of its length by the Moscow Railway station; but its spacious breadth, the magnificent buildings that line it on either side, the never-ending current of foot-passengers, equestrians, and carriages that stream through this main artery of the city, the roar of commerce, and the gay colouring of fashion, justify the comparisons that have been made between it and Regent Street in London and the Boulevards of Paris. At the same time, there is a picturesqueness in the semi-Oriental buildings that here and there break the line of more familiar architecture, in the rich and motley costumes of the people, and the

strange shapes and caparisons of the flights of vehicles that neither the French nor the British capital can boast of.

Most striking, however, is the aspect of the Prospect in winter, when the whole capital, in its white and ghastly draperies, has an unreal and fantastic appearance, more like the "sheeted spectre" of a city, such as might haunt the solitudes of the Pole, with walls of iceberg and streets of snow, and fretted ornaments of frost and rime, rather than a busy metropolis with warm currents of human life flowing through it. The Neva is a bewildering spectacle at these times, with skaters skimming and wheeling like flocks of swallows over its white surface—groups gathered here and there watching or taking part in the ice-sports, eating and drinking, buying and selling—and innumerable sledges, drawn by horses or pushed by the hand, speeding to and fro, with only a thin frozen board between them and the deep waters. But the aspect of the crowded and fashionable Nevski Promenade, where beauty and fashion are wont to sun themselves in their gaudiest plumage, is perhaps even more weird and strange; for the ordinary sounds of traffic are hushed by the thick carpet of snow, against which every object stands out with silhouette-like sharpness—the familiar wheeled vehicles have disappeared, and their place has been taken by sledges, that flit past noiselessly, save for the tinkling of the bells attached to the horses' necks and the muffled monotone of the "runners" over the hard-pressed snow. The owners of the sleighs lean back amid the luxurious wrappages of fur and down that bury them to the eyes; while the drivers, also thick-

padded against the cutting northern blast, lean eagerly forward as they pilot their horses through the mazy flights of sliding chariots, and the drifting clouds of powdery or feathery flakes in which they finally disappear. Even the foot-passengers, encased in their heavy garments of fur, have an uncouth and gnome-like air, that suits well the bizarre aspect of this singular winter city

We have not mentioned any of the interesting buildings that line the Nevski Prospect, with the exception of the Great Bazaar, but many of them are well worthy of notice. Chief among these is the Church of Our Lady of Kazan, with its dome and colonnade in imitation of St. Peter's at Rome. Within it are the miraculous image of the Virgin, brought hither from the banks of the Volga, and, what to many perhaps will be an object of greater interest, the tomb of Kutusoff, the "Saviour of Russia" on the occasion of Buonaparte's invasion. The Nevski has been dubbed "Toleration Street," for here in friendly neighbourhood are found churches of the Dissident Russian sects, of Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Armenians, and even a Mohammedan mosque. The Foundling Hospital, the Alexander Theatre, an imperial palace, and part of the façade of the Foreign Office are also among the architectural ornaments of this great promenade. Other fine streets radiate out like it from the Admiralty Square and the quays to the extremity of the city, and in these and the busy connecting thoroughfares the life and traffic of St. Petersburg are largely concentrated.

Taking the city as a whole, however, the streets seem a "world too wide" for the population. Its growth,

enormous as it has been, is not yet sufficient to fill out the ambitious plan of the founder. It is a young giant that has not reached its full stature and strength. Rapidly, however, the great capital of the Russian Empire is filling up the unbuilt-on spaces within its cincture, and populous suburbs are forming around it. Already it boasts itself to be the fifth, in point of population, of the capitals of Europe ; and in art and science, in culture and fashion, in trade and political influence, it struggles for a foremost place among the most famous and formidable of its rivals. Its history since first it secured a firm foothold on the treacherous morass, in a wasted and unfruitful region, under the cold skies of the north and amid the clearing smoke of battle, has been a magnificent tribute to the bold and far-seeing sagacity of its great Czar, who more than saint or apostle seems the real presiding genius and patron of the city.

Yet clear-sighted observers are not wanting who hold that St. Petersburg's sun is approaching its meridian, and soon will move towards its setting. The capital of the Czars is a thing extraneous to Russia. Its Italian architecture and French fashions are the expressions of tastes that have never truly become acclimatized ; its very site is on foreign soil. It is the work of arbitrary will, not the natural outgrowth of Slav energies. There is a party of growing numbers and influence with whom jealousy of the foreigner and love of country are accepted as almost synonymous. Too long, say the Slavophiles, has Russia been copying foreign models ; it is time that it took its destinies into its own keeping. St. Petersburg has had its uses, as a model ; but the Slavs have passed their probationary period, and can dispense with



it. If autocracy is to continue to guide Russia on in the fulfilment of its "mission," it must intrench itself again in the centre of the empire—at Moscow.

But the presence of the court, with all that that presence implies, is as the breath of St. Petersburg's life. "Take away," says Schuyler, "the army of the court and the officials, and it will sink into a third-rate town." It would no longer be able to make a successful fight against the efforts of nature to obliterate it. The treacherous bog over which it is built already yields under the intolerable weight of its palaces. It needs constant tinkering and mending to close the yawning gaps and keep the buildings in repair. When court favour deserts St. Petersburg, the swamp will be in a fair way to have its own again. In evil days may come about that conjunction—often predicted, but hitherto postponed—a westerly gale and high tide in the Gulf of Finland, and a breaking up of the ice and floods on the Neva. Then, indeed, might we see the splendid capital built up by Peter and his successors falling away into immeasurable ruin and dissolution, as may some day happen to their still greater work, the Russian Empire itself. Meanwhile it is still permitted us to hope better things of the future of St. Petersburg.

There are many places of note in the environs of St. Petersburg, but they owe their attractions to art rather than to nature. The surrounding country, like the province generally, is flat and uninteresting; and the soil, swampy, or sandy, or covered with funereal-looking pine-forests, does not make amends by fruitfulness and cheerful colour for its tameness of contour. But along the banks of the Neva, on the shores of the

Gulf of Finland, and on every "eligible site" near the capital, rise the chateaux and country-houses of the rich city merchants, the high officials of court, and of the great nobles, and the residences of royalty itself—splendid edifices surrounded by rich and beautiful gardens, parterres, and parks that belie both the climate and the soil.

Without playing the part of cicerone in these past or present country seats of the imperial family, or undertaking the endless task of describing the artistic treasures and luxuries with which they are stored, and the historical and romantic events of which they have been the scene, a passing glance may be thrown at the palace at Tsarskoë-Selo, where the villa originally erected by Catherine, the lowly-born consort of Peter the Great, has grown under later sovereigns to an immense pile, which, with its superb suites of rooms, the minor palaces and royal arsenal grouped about it, and the spacious grounds extending around it for many miles, is worthy to be the favourite resort of emperors and their courts. In another direction, not far from Cronstadt, are Peterhof, the retreat from whence Peter I. watched the growth of the Russian fleet, and his descendant, the Emperor Nicolas, the operations of the Anglo-French squadron before Cronstadt; Oranienbaum, where the ill-starred Peter III. frittered away his time in reviewing his famous "Holstein Guard," sailed his mimic fleet on the pond, and raised his Liliputian fortifications; and not far off the humble cottage where his ambitious spouse, the Second Catherine, was wont to retire when she desired a little release from the cares of state and the dissipations of court.

Lastly, there is the Palace of Gatchina, within which Alexander the Third, the Autocrat of spacious Russia, has, since the death of his father, dwelt in strict seclusion, surrounded by Cossack guards and elaborate precautions against treasonable attempts on his life.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE BALTIC PROVINCES.



THE traveller who leaves St. Petersburg by the Riga Gate will pass under the "Triumphal Arch of Narva" before leaving the southwestern outskirts of the city behind him.

This massive gateway of metal is surmounted by a colossal group, representing Victory drawn in a car by six steeds, and holding aloft laurels and other insignia of triumph in war. The road leads through the heart of the sea-board provinces of Russia between the Gulf of Finland and the Prussian frontier—a region that has had only too frequent and bitter experience of war and its glories—and ultimately to Warsaw and to the capitals of Western Europe. It introduces us, in short, to the "Baltic Provinces," and to their strangely "conglomerate" history and population.

It is not inappropriate, and probably not unintentional, that the name of Narva should be thus connected with Russian triumph. The arch commemorates the safe return of the troops of the Czar after the occupation of Paris by the Allies in 1815. Narva is a pleasantly situated little fortified town, distant some one hundred miles from the Russian capital, on the river Narova,

which here falls into the Gulf of Finland, after a course of forty miles from Lake Peipus—the “Lake of the Tchuds”—the great fresh-water basin on whose sedgy banks so many heroic episodes in Russian history have been enacted. The Narova is the western boundary of the government of St. Petersburg; and though St. Petersburg is officially accounted one of the Baltic Provinces, its history and position only partially connect it with the other maritime governments—Esthonia, Livonia, and Courland.

It is only after having crossed the Narova that we feel we are treading the soil that has been so fiercely battled for by successive invaders, and may yet be the scene of a still more gigantic struggle of rival ambitions; where Russian and Pole, Swede and Dane, Lithuanian and German, have each left indelible marks on the manners, language, and social condition of the people, but have failed to destroy the primitive type of Livonian character, or even to eradicate the beliefs, memories, and observances that have been handed down from father to son from times anterior to the introduction of Christianity.

On a sluggish stream that falls into Lake Peipus stands the town of Dorpat, whose university, founded by the great Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden, is still, says Mr. Gallenga, “the best in the empire,” and the nucleus of such learning and culture as are to be found in the Baltic Provinces. Due west of Narva, and not far within the entrance of the Gulf of Finland, is Reval, the capital of Esthonia, a busy seaport, with the aspect of an old Rhenish town, and whose history for six hundred years is full of stirring incidents of siege and civil broil.

Riga, the chief town of Livonia, at the mouth of the Dwina, a much more important place,—indeed, one of the leading cities of the empire in trade and population,—has the same German air in its architecture, its municipal organization, the very names of the burghers, and the language in which its extensive business is conducted. A little distance beyond is Mittau, the provincial capital of Courland, whose glory departed with its last duke, Biren, the favourite of the Empress Anne Ivanovna, though a transient gleam returned to it for the six years that Louis XVIII. made Mittau his residence during his exile from France.

Around these five towns—Riga, Reval, Mittau, Dorpat, and Narva—the great events in the history of this region have mainly centred. They are still the chief seats of population and of commercial movement. To none of them, however, need we go if we wish to feel the pulse of the people of these provinces. Some of them are busy seaport towns, crowded with foreign shipping and foreign seamen. The street sounds are a perfect Babel of diverse tongues, in which round British oaths are plentifully interlarded. There is little at first sight to remind the traveller that he is in the Czar's dominions. Here and there a dome or a minaret, in the familiar Byzantine taste, reminds one that the Greek Orthodox faith has numerous adherents amidst the prevailing Lutheranism.

The superior officials will probably be found to be Russian; and many classes of tradesmen—shoemakers, carpenters, and the like—are mainly recruited from the interior of the empire. The clumsy rafts and boats that descend the Dwina with their freights of timber, grain,

hemp, flax, and tallow are manned to a large extent by crews whose physiognomy, dress, and habits mark them as true sons of Holy Russia. But this is only a fluctuating and intermittent population. The Slav is not at home on the shores of the Baltic. He does not, except in the extreme north, take kindly to the strong fresh breath of the sea; his tastes and occupations are essentially those of the inland country, where the level plains stretch on all sides to the horizon's edge.

Much more in keeping with the situation are the evidences of German influences which have leavened the Baltic Provinces from one end to the other. In the counting-houses, in the exchanges, on the quays, the strong, guttural tones of the Teutonic tongue are heard. The names inscribed on the sign-boards of the most flourishing shops, and on the door-plates of the great merchant houses, unmistakably tell of the German prigin of their owners. Riga, for instance, is a city where the commercial and higher grades of social life are essentially German. It has its *Bürgermeister* and its *Rathhaus*, its *Domkirche* and its picturesque groupings of brick gables and high-pitched roofs, as if it were a veritable ancient city of the Fatherland. The streets and public places are mostly designated by German titles; and indeed over a great part of the Baltic Provinces the nomenclature of the towns and villages is, as a rule, Teutonic in sound and sense, and tells of past conquest and long possession by the "superior race." The bourgeoisie tenaciously retain with the language and national character many of the old customs and manners which are going out of fashion in their ancestral home itself, so that in some respects they may be said to be more

German than the Germans. Add to this that the great seigneurs—the nobles, landed proprietors, and persons of consideration in the provinces—are, as a rule, of German descent, and it will be seen that the influence of Russia's powerful neighbour in this part of the world is much greater than can be measured by the mere numerical strength of the Teutonic element.

Along the coasts of Livonia and Courland there is a considerable sprinkling of Swedes, mostly hardy fishermen and seamen; and in few places are the primitive traditions and manners of the Scandinavian race preserved more pure from the contamination of modern change than in the islands of Dago and Oesel. In the south, especially in Courland, the spare, cadaverous figures with Jewish traits, looking the very image of meagre and hungry care, that haunt the shadows of the narrow, vilely-smelling streets, tell of the close neighbourhood of Poland. Poles, too, there are, and representatives of many other nations; but none of all those that have been enumerated have much relationship either by blood or sympathy with the true natives of the country.

In reality there are two aboriginal peoples in the Baltic Provinces—the Letts, a branch of the Lithuanian race, who inhabit Courland and Southern Livonia; and the Esthonians, and remnants of other tribes of Finnish origin, that occupy the northern districts. One needs to rummage far back into obscure antiquity before discovering any race affinity between these two peasant peoples. The languages bear no resemblance to each other. There are broad distinctions of temperament, physiognomy, and traditional beliefs. It is only by a sort of geographical accident that they have been placed



side by side, and subjected to the same hard discipline of fate.

Misfortune alone has made them brethren. Centuries of harsh usage and hard fare have developed a wonderfully close likeness between Lett and Esthonian, at least on a first and superficial view. Glancing at the social condition of these lowly husbandmen and woodmen, we might compare them to a dingy, well-worn carpet, where the original brightness of colour and diversity of pattern have been obliterated by being constantly trodden on. Lithuanian and Finn, they have been trampled upon by heavy-footed masters from their first appearance in medieval history. They have borne their destiny on the whole patiently and uncomplainingly, bending their shoulders to the yoke of German, Swede, Pole, and Russ, meekly submitting to the "whips and scorns" of their haughty superiors, and bearing, as a part of the order of things, the chains that bound them to the land like beasts of burden. Since the early part of the present century, serfage has been abolished in the Baltic Provinces, and well-meant attempts have been made to ameliorate the condition of the peasantry; but the whip is still an "institution" in the land, and the dulled and lustreless eye, the rude features, the awkward movements, and the slavish demeanour of the poor Livonian or Esthonian boor show that the stamp of servitude is still upon body and spirit. The old saying runs that "Esthonia is an Elysium for the noble, a heaven for the clergy, a mine of gold for the stranger, and a hell for the peasant;" and though this needs some modification in the present day, it is still too true that the agricultural classes are deplorably poor and degraded,

In Esthonia the soil is fruitful, and the scenery often cheerful and picturesque. But in the more southern provinces, where the dull, flat features of the country are only broken by lugubrious masses of pine woods; where forest, sandy down, and marsh alternate in monotonous succession; and where in many places the thin soil only grudgingly yields enough to satisfy the daily wants of the cultivator, the picture of peasant life is still more depressing.

The Livonian peasant, unlike his Russian brother, prefers, as a rule, to build his house apart from his fellows, instead of joining with his neighbours to form a little village. His lowly cabin will be found sheltered behind some rising ground that breaks a little the force of the terrible blasts of winter, and overlooking a meagre little patch of grain-land or flax plantation which he cultivates, or nestling in some clearing of the interminable forest of fir and larch, whence he daily sallies forth with axe on shoulder.

The roads are execrably bad; and unless one travel by railway or over the Government post-routes, the tedious journey in the rude, springless vehicles over sandy hillocks, rough heaths, and deeply furrowed tracks through the pine forests fills every bone of the body with aches. There is a stately grandeur about these silvan glades when the flickering winter sunlight streams down on the path between the tall trunks, or, better still, when the stars are seen shining with unearthly magnitude and splendour between the snow-laden branches. In the summer season a resinous perfume fills the air; the road is strewn with the fallen cones and needles of the larch, spruce, and fir; thickets of oak,

ash, hazel, maple, and beech vary with their lighter green the sombre colouring of the forest ; and a profusion of wood-flowers and berries adds to the wild charms of the scene. But a more than usually severe jolt, as the teluga strikes against some log or stone, or a sudden halt, as the wheels stick in a deep rut, soon recalls the mind to the miseries of travel in the Baltic Provinces.

The human habitations encountered at intervals do little in the way of enlivening the scenery. As a rule, they tell only too plainly not only of rustic plainness and poverty, but of squalid wretchedness and want. The thatched roof of bent or grass is ragged and moss-grown ; the rude log walls have chinks through which the keen winds and sifting snows of winter find a way to the dark and smoky interior. M. D'Henriet, in his lively account of the Baltic Provinces, furnishes us with a vivid, though perhaps slightly overdrawn, sketch of the desolate and pitiable aspect of Lettish peasant life.

"The people," he says, "have an aspect of degradation, and at the same time of gloomy resignation, mournful to see. Near the villages, on little eminences that are called hills, the cemeteries have a desolate air. The cabins are tumbling in ruins, if one can call ruins these heaps of pieces of wood, rudely squared, disjointed by humidity, frost, and storms, the courtyards noisome, the doors badly fitting, with holes in the roof serving for chimneys, and in place of windows, shutters that are open during the day, and are entirely closed in the evening against indiscreet glances."

Within the dwelling it is equally vain to search for marks of comfort. The diminutive cattle and the human inmates are housed together, with often hardly

a partition separating them. Tables and chairs are luxuries which only the rich can dream of. A rude bench, or perhaps the hard clay floor, is the couch on which the family huddle together for warmth and companionship during the bitter nights of winter. But notwithstanding his hard life and fare, and the discomforts of his "smoky crib," the Lettish peasant sleeps soundly on the bosom of his mother earth. Sleep and—when he can get it—strong liquor are his great resorts in which he seeks and finds forgetfulness of his wrongs and his miseries.

In the north of the Baltic Provinces, where the natural fertility of the land is greater, some rays of prosperity may be seen reflected in the condition of the population—touches of colour enlivening the outsides of the cottages, and traces of comfort in their internal arrangements; suggestions of coquetry and luxury in the holiday attire, and a less heavy-laden and hopeless expression on the faces of the people. It is no easy task to penetrate the thick rind of suspicion, timidity, and reserve with which the peasant guards the thoughts of his soul from the view of the stranger. Once behind these guards, and fully admitted to his confidence, one is surprised to discover how much true beauty and pathos are hidden under the dull mask which the Livonian or the Esthonian cultivator wears before the *Saxa*—the "Saxon," the master.

Lett or Finn, he preserves with a kind of religious tenacity the remembrances of the remote past of his race. Fragments of the heroic songs of their pagan ancestors are still chanted at the firesides of the peasant people, and keep alive the memory of the "days of the past," when they

were independent and warrior nations. The dwellers round the "Lake of the Tchuds" (Peipus), sing mournfully the dirges of their buried freedom—the glorious period ere "the banners of the strangers waved, ere the intruders made us slaves, enchained us as the serfs of tyrants, forced us to be their servants." The "*Kalevy Poeg*," the national Epos of Esthonia, tells in a strain of profound sadness of the stupendous deeds of valour of their hero, the "son of Kalev," who uprooted trees, exterminated the beasts of prey, explored the waste regions of the north, and fought the spirits of the snow and fire, and overthrew all enemies until the "men of iron" came up from the south, and at the close of one terrible day of slaughter the liberties of Esthonia lay prostrate at the feet of the mysterious strangers. "Long," says Rambaud in his paraphrase of this remarkable poem, "his sons trusted that Mana, the god of death, would give the hero back his liberty, and that once again the iron men would feel the weight of his arm; but, like King Arthur, he has never appeared, bringing to his people the liberty that the Germans have taken from them."

It was in the closing years of the twelfth century that the German crusade against these heathens of the Baltic was begun, under the spiritual guidance of Bishop Albert. Missionaries of the Latin Church, and merchant adventurers of the Hanseatic League, which had stations at Novgorod and elsewhere, had already penetrated into this region; but the natives, discerning the danger to their independence, had cast them out. In 1200 the town of Riga was founded; and in the following year the Order of the Sword-Bearers was instituted,

and then began that extraordinary process of "conversion" that made the natives of the Baltic Provinces at once Christians and slaves. By their superior arms and discipline the Brethren of the Sword slaughtered the unhappy people in thousands, seized on their lands, and reduced the survivors to a state of abject servitude; cities, fortified posts, and baronial keeps arose on the Dwina, the Aa, and the Narova; Reval, and other coast towns that had been conquered by the Danes in the days of Canute the Great, were purchased or wrested from the Northmen; and Dorpat, founded by the famous Grand Duke Jaroslav of Kiev, with the rest of the possessions of the Russians in these parts, fell into the hands of the Livonian Knights.

In 1237 the Order was amalgamated with that of the Teutonic Knights, who had been promoting the spread of the faith by similar "mild" methods in the Lithuanian Provinces. Then followed the periods of the power, the decadence, and the fall of the "unnatural institution" founded by these warrior priests; and the fierce struggles of Lithuanians, Poles, Danes, Swedes, and Russians for their possessions. In the latter half of the seventeenth century the supremacy of Sweden was established over the greater part of these provinces; and it was in their time that the Reformed faith was introduced, and has since continued to be the prevailing ~~creed~~ creed, though, as in the parallel cases where the tenets of the Greek and Roman Churches have been imposed by authority on these aboriginal races, Christian doctrines are strangely and apparently inextricably mixed up with primitive pagan superstitions.

The turn of Russia came when Peter the Great resolved

to break out his "window towards Europe," through the Swedish possessions on the Gulf of Finland. The beginning was disastrously discouraging. In 1700 the Russian army was completely destroyed by a Swedish force, not a seventh of its strength, before Narva. Four years later, however, after Peter had laid the corner-stone of his new capital on the Neva, Narva was taken by storm; and Sheremetief's conquering host of Cossacks, Tartars, and Russians spread over the Baltic Provinces, burning, pillaging, and massacring, and seizing, among other loot, a Lettish damsel, the servant of a Swedish pastor at Marienburg, who became the wife of Peter, and his successor on the throne of the Czars. Since the Russian conquest, the lot of the Livonian and Esthonian peasant has been somewhat ameliorated, and the provinces have been allowed to retain a certain measure of self-government. There have been "servile risings" and snatchings at independence, but never on the large scale or with the determined spirit shown by the Poles. Early in the century serfage was abolished; but the land is still mainly the heritage of the German nobles, who have managed to hold it through every change of government.

A word or two upon the most important seats of commerce and population—Reval and Riga—must close our notice of this interesting country and people. Reval, as it is approached from the sea, has an appearance which leads the visitor to look for great things,—an expectation which, as in the case of many other cities, is hardly fulfilled on a closer view. Yet, in spite of the many narrow and filthy streets, lined by tumble-down wooden houses, and thronged with passengers that wear but too many indications of the rude and poverty-

stricken condition of the lower classes, it is a place that is crammed with the souvenirs of an eventful past, reaching back through seven centuries, and not without hopeful signs of modern wealth, power, and culture.

The port, defended by an outlying line of reefs and islands, and strongly fortified, is a station of the Russian Baltic fleet. On shore, the most prominent feature is the *Dom* quarter of the town, perched along the ridge of a rocky height, with steep slopes descending to the quays and warehouses, the streets of artisans' and merchants' houses, the sandy shores, and the harbour thronged with the masts of shipping that lie in front and in flank. On the *Dom* no plebeian edifice may rear its head. By situation and association its inhabitants stand apart from the vulgar herd. Under this rock sleeps Kolyvan, the half-fabulous Finnish hero, whose name was borne by the spot before it took its Danish title of Refwell—the "Reef." Upon it rose the first fortifications and religious houses built by the Danes when they took possession of the locality.

The hand of successive occupiers—the Brethren of the Sword, the Swedes, and the Russians—may be traced on the castle and the group of churches and aristocratic dwellings clustered on the ridge. The great landmark of Reval from seaward is the tower of St. Oluf, the highest in Russia. The architecture of the church below carries us back to the early part of the fourteenth century; but of still older date is the Church of St. Nicolas, within which are preserved part of the original frescoes of Holbein's "Dance of Death." The desiccated body of the Duke de Cröy, the defeated general of the Russian army at Narva, whose remains, seized upon by



his disappointed creditors as the only thing substantial they could find to represent his enormous debts, lay in the Church of St. Nicolas without obtaining the rites of sepulture for more than a century and a half, and was regularly exhibited to the curious. A few years ago, however, the Russian Government had the remains decently interred. In the Domkirche, or Cathedral, rest the bones of Admiral Greig, one of the heroes of Russian naval annals. Other notable buildings of Reval are the Schwarzen-häupter-haus, the House of the Black-heads, or military association of young citizens for the defence of the town, an ancient institution also found at Riga and Dorpat; the Ritterschafts-haus, or place of meeting of the provincial council; "Long Hermann," the lofty circular tower crowning the Dom rock; and the Lustschloss, or Imperial Palace. "The city is strewn," says the writer of "Letters from the Baltic," "with the ruined remains of convents and monasteries, and the outer circumference is bound in with walls and towers of every irregular form."

The effacing hand of time and the exigencies of commercial development have done more to blot out the traces of ancient Riga than has happened in the case of its old competitor Reval, which it has long passed in the contest for wealth and business. Its position on the deep, navigable Dwina, and its communications by canal and railway with the interior of the empire, have made the fortune of the capital of Livonia. The entrance to the river is defended by the fortress of Dünamünde; and vessels ascend the sluggish stream several miles before they come opposite the wharves of Riga. Nearly a million tons of shipping—mostly British and German—


enter the port in the year, to bear away the vast quantities of grain, timber, flax, and other Russian produce collected here.

The city has a population of one hundred thousand, and is rapidly growing. A bridge of boats connects the two banks of the river, here half a mile broad, during the open season, and is continually thronged with streams of passengers and goods. Riga rises on the north bank in amphitheatre form. The general features, as has already been said, are rather those of a German than a Russian town. Its present rulers have honoured it with special favours; and it has been called the "darling child of the Czars," who, after their coronation at Moscow, are wont to pay a visit to the commercial city on the Baltic.

It retains many of its ancient privileges, and is the only Russian city that possesses a municipal guard. It has its full share of literary, artistic, scientific, and technical organizations, of charitable institutions, and ecclesiastical edifices. Under the lofty tower of the Domkirche are the bones of Bishop Albert, the founder of Riga. The palace, now the residence of the governor-general of the province, was once the seat of the Grand Masters of the Teutonic Order. In the Ritter-haus the nobility of Livonia hold their assemblies, in a hall emblazoned with their coats of arms. But perhaps the most remarkable building of old Riga is the Schwarzenhäupter-haus—where the "Black-heads" assembled for solemn ceremonial or active duty—whose quaint and lowering features seem stamped with the grim character of that remote period in which the city took its rise, while within it are stored the relics of its history from those fighting times down to its busy and peaceful present.

## CHAPTER XV.

### RUSSIA ON THE BLACK SEA—THE CRIMEA.

T is time to change the scene to a new and warmer clime and a brighter sky. The dark lines of the pine forests retire into the background, and for a while we bid farewell to the deep morasses and dreary heaths that border the northern seas, and the heavy cloak of snow and ice that muffles land and water for many months in the year. The sad-coloured life of man also takes some fresher and livelier tints under a warmer sun.

Scenery and accessories begin to wear a semi-Oriental stamp. The green steppe lands stretch illimitably to the horizon; the camel and the dromedary are among the beasts of burden, and the buffalo drags the primitive wooden plough over the land, in the spots where force of circumstances has compelled a race of roving and pastoral proclivities to adopt a settled agricultural life. Over whole districts of Southern Russia, Tartar faces and Tartar speech, the flowing robe, the fez, and the slippers, khans, mosques, shrines of Mohammedan saints, and flat-roofed houses turning their "blind side" to the narrow and crooked lanes and opening into spacious inner courtyards, are as much the characteristic features

of existence in town and country as they are across the Black Sea in Asia Minor. These signs of Eastern life increase with every step of progress that we take; for henceforward we move farther and farther from Europe and familiar European manners.

Historically we find ourselves in a more recent era of Russia's development than any that has hitherto been reached. It is not easy to realize—so firmly and broadly has the encroaching foot of the Slav been planted on the Euxine—that it is scarcely a century since the command of the northern coasts of the Black Sea was wrested from the Turk. It may well bear traces of the close neighbourhood of Asia, seeing that a hundred years ago the Crimea was still, politically speaking, a part of that continent, and a stronghold, isolated but intact, of the widespread dominions of Islam. In the history of this New Russia of the south, Peter the Great and his "eaglets" flit into the background. Their forms are only a little better defined through the mists of time and distance than those of their ruder forefathers; and their real "field of fame," like that of the older Czars, was in the north. The great figures in the task of conquering and organizing, and, it may almost be said, creating out of chaos, the provinces of the Black Sea, are that imperial and imperious dame Catherine II., her minister and favourite the magnificent Potemkin, and her famous general Suvaroff, whose stomach for hard fighting and hard work surpassed even that of the founder of St. Petersburg and victor of Poltava.

Perhaps no better standpoint could be chosen for taking a brief survey of the changeful fortunes of Southern Russia, as a necessary preliminary to describing its

aspect of to-day, than the rocky promontory at the south-western corner of the Crimea—"a peninsula of a peninsula"—on which stand the ruins of Chersonesus.

The early history of the old Greek city carries us back two thousand five hundred years; while within sight is the scene of one of the most important struggles that modern Europe has witnessed. Sixty dynasties have within the cognizance of history held sway in this distracted corner of the world since the Greek colonists from Heraclea settled here among the savage and inhospitable Tauri, whose caves may still be seen in the Inkerman valley and other parts of the Crimea. Emigrants from Miletus had already established themselves at Panticapæum, the modern Kertch, at the eastern extremity of the "Tauric Chersonese," and founded the famous kingdom of Bosphorus.

Earlier and more illustrious visitors may have come hither from the Ægean Sea. Commander Buchan Telfer, whose book is a perfect storehouse of interesting facts bearing on the history and archæology of the Crimea, gives reasons for identifying Cape Aia, not far from Chersonesus, with the place where Iphigenia found refuge with the Tauri, and the inlet of Balaclava as the scene of Ulysses' adventures with the monstrous Læstrigons.

Of the long quarrel between colony and colony, republic and monarchy, Greek of the peninsula and Scythian of the mainland, it is needless to speak; nor of the conquests of Mithridates Eupator, of the extension hither of the Roman rule, or of the rich and troublesome inheritance that this province became to the Eastern Empire. Chersonesus in those days was a wonderfully rich and beautiful city, as the remains

of its splendid temples, baths, arches, aqueducts, amphitheatres, and other monuments attested down to a recent date; and it had many rivals in wealth and population among the other Greek cities on the Euxine. Pope Clement I. worked as a slave in the neighbouring quarries, and preached the gospel in its streets, and so by degrees the city became converted to Christianity.

Then from their vantage-ground on the strongly-fortified point the Christian city heard of, and almost saw, the "march of the nations" across the great highway of the steppes—Huns, Goths, Vandals, and Sarmatians, following on one another like waves of the sea, each overtopping that which went before, overwhelming old empires, casting down the labours built up by hands and brains during thirty generations of growing civilizations, and spreading immeasurable change over the western world. In spite of the supposed impregnability of their position, the citizens must have trembled with a foreboding of approaching ruin on seeing these destructive and ruthless forces passing so close to their doors.

At length the turn of Chersonesus came. The Grand Prince Vladimir of Kiev marched his conquering host of half-clad Slavs down into the Crimea. The pagan prince swore an oath—an illogical one it seems in our day—that if he captured this Christian town, he himself and his whole people would embrace the faith of the Cross. Capture it he did, and the first Christian ruler of the Russians was baptized, and celebrated his nuptials with the sister of the Emperor of the East, on the spot now covered by the Church of the Holy Mother of God at Chersonesus.

Huns, Khazars, Petchenegs, Cumanians, Polovtsis

afterwards descended on the Black Sea countries, and seized and sacked the cities. Adventurers from the growing Italian republics pushed thither, and founded colonies on the coasts of the Euxine and Sea of Azov. Venetians and Genoese quarrelled for supremacy, as the Milesians and Heracleans had done eighteen centuries before.

The great horde of Mongols had meanwhile descended and settled like a troop of locusts on the countries to northward. The Nogai tribe of Tartars established themselves on the steppes north of the Black Sea, and when the power of the Golden Horde dissolved, the Khanate of Crim Tartary rose into prominence.

A khan of the Nogais, a descendant of the great Genghiz, adopted the surname of Ghirei, out of gratitude to a humble peasant of that name who had saved his life. The Ghireis, fighting for plunder and empire, established a semi-barbaric rule on the Crimea, and in the close of the fifteenth century planted their capital at Baktchi-Serai, separated by a range of hills from Chersonesus; and by the aid of the Turks, and at the price of acknowledging the suzerainty of the Porte, the Tartars expelled the Genoese from the peninsula. A long succession of bloody and ruthless raids into the heart of Russia, as far as Moscow and Nijni, and even farther, signalized the period of Tartar power in the south.

At length came Nemesis, slow-footed but sure. Already Chersonesus was a ruin. Olgerd, the Lithuanian, nephew of Gedimin, leaving Kiev smoking behind him, had, in 1368, swept with his conquering host through the isthmus of Perecop, beat down the walls of the grand old Greek city, and reduced it to a heap of broken masonry.

The Crimean khans, aided by their overlord at Constantinople, fought desperately to preserve their possessions, and up to the last were able to take the offensive against their implacable northern foe. But the limits of their power gradually and surely contracted, as that of Russia enlarged. Peter the Great had among his many schemes one of establishing himself on the Black Sea, and driving Turk and Tartar beyond the Danube, if not beyond the Bosphorus. He built a fleet at Voronej on the Don, gained the first Russian naval victory at the mouth of that river, captured Azov, and founded the seaport of Taganrog, on the Palus Mæotis. But an overwhelming repulse on the Pruth compelled him to surrender his southern conquests.

The growing empire of the Czars was not ripe enough, nor the Ottoman power sufficiently rotten, for the ambitious project to succeed; and the more immediate necessity of opening up a way to the Baltic had to be attended to. Peter, however, had dealt a fatal blow to the Cossack commonwealths on the Don and Dnieper, who, from faithful watch-dogs guarding the house against infidel robbers, had become wolves preying on friend and foe alike.

A long stride in advance was taken in the reign of the Empress Anne, whose famous generals, Münich and Lascy, twice forced the lines of Perecop in the war of 1736-9, devastated the Crimea, and compelled the Khan and the Sultan to cede the steppe country between the Dnieper and the Boug. The ceded territory, called New Servia, was organized by the Empress Elizabeth into a military and agricultural colony, and settled with Bulgarian, Servian, Hungarian, and Wallachian refugees,



who replaced the old Cossack associations, and the last relics of the Zaporogian bands were scattered by Catherine the Great. This powerful sovereign proved a more formidable foe to Turkey than even Peter. In the war of 1767-74, her generals Galitsyne and Rumantsof overran the Sultan's dominions as far as the Balkans. Dolguruky broke through the "lines of Perecop," and extinguished for ever the rule of the Grand Khalif in the peninsula; and a Russian fleet appeared in the Ægean, and ravaged the Turkish coasts and islands.

By the Treaty of Kainardji (1774), the mouths of the Don and the Dniester were ceded to Russia, the Crimea was made independent, Russian merchantmen were allowed free access to the Black Sea, and a kind of Russian protectorate was established over the Christian subjects of the Porte. Nine years later the last khan of the Crimea, Chahin Ghirei, was dethroned, and the peninsula was formed with the adjoining mainland into the new Russian province of Taurida.

The revenge of the Slav upon the Tartar was almost complete. Turkey also was rapidly going to the wall in the long struggle for predominance in the East. Potemkin, created Prince of Taurida, established a naval arsenal at Kherson, the new port established at the mouth of the Dnieper, and named after the old Greek city from whose ruins we are taking our survey. With the stones of Chersonesus itself were laid the foundations of the strong fortress that began to rise close at hand at Sevastopol; while all over the southern steppes emigrants poured in and flourishing colonies sprang up. From 1787 to 1792 raged another war with Turkey, of which Suvaroff was the presiding genius, and the capture of

Ismail the crowning event. By the Peace of Jassy (1792) the frontiers of Russia were extended to the Dniester; and shortly after, the Empress in person, attended by the magnificent Potemkin, laid with extraordinary pomp the foundations of the great emporium of the Euxine—Odessa.

The later phases of this prolonged conflict between Russ and Turk, in which the latter has had to let go his hold bit by bit of his conquests in Europe, are of too recent date to call for recapitulation in detail. The wars of Alexander I. against the Porte terminated with the Treaty of Bucharest in 1812, which gave Bessarabia to the Czar, and brought the Russian frontier to the Pruth. The events of the Crimean War—when the bare plateau behind Chersonesus became the scene of the struggle between Russia and the Western Powers—and of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877, are still fresh in most memories.

The modern traveller by land will probably follow in the steps of the ancient invaders, and enter the Crimea by the Isthmus of Perecop, unless, indeed, he journeys by the new line of railway from Moscow and the Don regions, which crosses the shallows of the Sivash, or "Putrid Sea." Perecop will not detain him long, in spite of its memories of great sieges and assaults connected with the names of Münich, Lascy, and earlier military heroes.

The white walls of the fortifications guard the neck of land, only five miles in breadth, and glisten far over the surrounding waters and scarcely less flat and monotonous steppes. The deep fosse cut across the isthmus by the Tartar khans is still preserved, and is

crossed by a bridge with an imposing gateway—the portal of the Crimea. The minarets of a mosque rear themselves beside the bulkier form of a Greek church; and in the modest retirement of a back street hides a synagogue of the Jews. The population consists of Russians, Tartars, Armenians, Greeks, and Jews of the Karaim sect: these strangely assorted peoples will be found in greater or less proportion in almost every Crimean town.

Leaving Perecop—the “Gate of the Neck”—behind, and advancing over the broadening steppe, a stranger will find it difficult to believe that he is still on European ground, far less in that famous Tauridian peninsula whose luxuriant beauty has been so highly extolled. The plain is destitute of tree or of stream; no cliff or hill breaks the level expanse, save by-and-by a pale blue line of mountains far on the southern horizon.

The soil is impregnated with salt; the shallow lakes are brackish, or covered with a white efflorescence. The creeks and marshes that branch and wind among the sand-hills on the margin of the “Putrid Lake” are bitterly salt. The fetid smell that rises from the stagnant surface of that shallow inlet of the Sea of Azov justifies its evil-sounding name. The villages are small, half ruinous, and scattered widely apart. The chief signs of traffic are long trains of waggons, laden with raw salt, on their way to Perecop, whence this sole product of the Crimean lakes is distributed over the Czar’s empire.

These waggons are chiefly drawn by oxen, but sometimes double-humped camels of the Bactrian breed are the beasts of burden. The progenitors of the

uncouth-looking creatures were doubtless brought from the deserts of Central Asia by the forefathers of their no less shaggy drivers. The Tartar cultivator of the Crimea has indeed given up the roaming life of his ancestors; but he still clings to the ancestral religion and customs, and his dress is a compromise between Western and Eastern tastes. Flocks of fat-tailed sheep pasture the waste, and seem to find the saline herbage toothsome and fattening. Around a well by the roadside loose-robed turbaned shepherds may be seen watering their goats, camels, and sheep from a trough, in the patriarchal fashion of Syria. The village streets are narrow crooked alleys between the blind walls of courtyards, which screen the half-ruinous flat-topped houses, provided in the case of the richer citizens with harems and fountains and shady porches; and there are the mosque for the faithful, and the khan for the traveller, as in other Mohammedan lands.

These tokens of the long predominance of Tartar rule in the peninsula are gradually disappearing. Russian colonies and Russian ideas are slowly ousting the old race from Crim Tartary, or changing it after their own image. But generations probably will elapse before the peninsula loses its character as a country distinctively Mohammedan in manners and faith.

As the head-waters of the Salgir River are approached, the country begins to rise, and the soil and scenery to improve. The peaks and richly-wooded slopes of the Tchatir Dag, or "Tent Mountain," the highest summit of the range which lines the southern coast of the peninsula, stand out in bold relief. A region forming in every respect a contrast to the dreary steppe lands

behind is reached. Small streams—mere brooks in summer, but roaring torrents after the melting of the mountain snows—pour down from these hills to join the Salgir, through fertile valleys and past villages surrounded by corn-fields and orchards and overhung by bold bluffs of limestone.

By-and-by we come to Simpheropol—anciently Ak Metchet, or the "White Mosque"—the modern capital of the Crimea, and the residence of the Governor of the Province of Taurida. Like other Crimean towns, it presents a strange jumble of the old and the new; but here, perhaps, the new is gaining ground more rapidly than elsewhere. The width of a street only separates the Russian town, with its huge cathedral, barracks, boulevards, and gymnasia, from the Tartar city, with its mosques and bazaars and curiously mixed population of Nogais, Greeks, and Jews.

The principal "lions" of Simpheropol, however, are too new and raw to compete in interest with those of Baktchi-Serai, one stage distant to the south-west. Again groves of oak and beech, fine gardens of plum and apple trees, and rich grassy meadows with numerous villages are passed, as we descend the little river *Alma*, to the old Tartar capital. It still preserves all the main features which it possessed when it was the headquarters of the warlike dynasty of the Ghireis, and the gathering-place of the hosts of horsemen who were accustomed for many centuries to devastate Russia and Poland, and return thither-loaded with plunder, and dragging in their train crowds of unfortunate captives, who were regularly sold as slaves in the markets of Kaffa and other Crimean towns.

The Palace of the Khans still stands surrounded by walls and gates, in the centre of beautiful gardens with fountains, terraces, baths, arbours of vines, and other evidences of the taste of the old possessors. Close by are the Grand Mosque and the Mausoleums of the Tartar Khans. Most famous of the three hundred fountains in the city is the *Seyl-sybyl*—the “flood of tears”—that commemorates the grief of Krim Ghirei on the death of the lovely Christian captive who refused to conform to the faith of her enamoured master, as is sung by Alexander Pushkin in an immortal poem.

Baktchi-Serai is still to all intents a Tartar city, being almost exclusively inhabited by the Nogais, with a sprinkling of Jews and Armenians. It is crowded with mosques and Mohammedan schools; and from the wonderful beauty of its situation, in a narrow valley overhung by a precipitous mountain, with the tall and slender minarets and palace turrets rising from groves of orchard trees, mulberries, and poplars, it is one of the most unique and romantic spots in Russia.

In the neighbourhood are some curious excavated rock dwellings, probably the work of the ancient troglodyte inhabitants of this region. A little way up the valley is Tchufut Kale—the Jews’ Fort—where, perched on the summit of a precipitous rock, accessible only on one side, is the synagogue, still, or till lately, used by the Karaim Hebrews, and underneath are the rock-hewn, chambers where the persecuted race have, it is said, found shelter since before the Christian era.

In another narrow defile is a Greek monastery, dedicated to the Virgin, the dim crypts and chapels of which, wholly or in part excavated in the face of the

cliff, are reached by a narrow zigzag staircase, up which hundreds of pilgrims from all parts of the Crimea toil on the day of the Assumption to pay their devotions at the rock-hewn shrine. Not far off is a lofty crag surmounted by ruined walls—once the capital of the Tetraxite Goths, afterwards the Genoese fortress of Mangup, later a sheltering-place of the Karaim sect, but now abandoned to the bats and the owls.

It is not alone in the vicinity of Baktchi-Serai that we find rock staircases and cave-dwellings formed by the hand of nature or of man; mouldering ruins of fortresses and castles built by Greek, or Goth, or Genoese crowning some high cliff and beetling over a fertile valley or a gorge green with the foliage of the laurel, the olive, and the fig; hillsides covered with vineyards, and hamlets surmounted by the towers of mosque or Christian church, with the grand dome of the "Tent Mountain" and its neighbour giants looking down from their cold heights on the smiling scene. These are characteristics of the Southern Crimea, from Chersonesus to Kaffa, and entitle it to the name which has been bestowed on it of the "Italy" of Russia.

On the southern side of the Tauric Alps, especially, where the mountain range interposes a barrier to the cold blasts that sweep across the steppes, the climate is peculiarly mild and suited to the growth of a semi-tropical vegetation. The hills slope down steeply or descend in abrupt steps from a height of four or five thousand feet to the level of the waters of the Black Sea, which in many places wash the bases of great precipices hundreds of feet high, and hollow out the soft calcareous rock into fantastic shapes. Between the pro-

jecting capes are lovely bays ; and at the head of these are mountain streams rushing down green valleys, or brawling through deep ravines, overhung with the foliage of walnut and oak trees, and frequently making sheer plunges over the rocky ledges in their channels. Little towns of villas with hotels and bathing-places shelter themselves in these bights, on the margin of the bright blue waters of the Euxine ; and splendid palaces and country seats, many of them surrounded by magnificent parks, gardens, and vineyards, are strewn over the mountain side. For this is the playground of Russia—the only available spot in the wide empire where the rigorous hand of winter can be escaped—and the wealthy and the noble and the valetudinarian crowd thither in the “season,” as their brethren in the West hasten to the Riviera.

The eastern, the central, and the western districts of the Tauric chain possess three distinct sources of interest. To the eastward from Sudak or from Theodosia, and along the minor peninsula of the “Cimmerian Chersonese” to the Strait of Yenikale, where the Sea of Azov communicates with the Black Sea, the range dwindles in height and grandeur, and the country becomes comparatively bare and sterile. But it is a region in which the antiquarian and archæologist would find an exhaustless storehouse of treasures. Great mounds of pottery, extensive catacombs, fragments of aqueducts, roads, and fountains mark the sites of the ancient Greek colonies. Cyclopean walls and dolmens tell of the rude labours and probably of the bloody sacrificial rites of the savage Tauric and Scythian peoples who lived here when the strangers from Miletus and Heraclea



landed twenty-four centuries ago. The ruins of Greek temples, Byzantine churches, and Tartar mosques tell of the introduction and the decay of new forms of faith, as the remains of old moles and feudal castles commanding the harbours speak of the glorious period of the predominance and rivalry of the maritime republics of Genoa and Venice in this region.

Most famous among these places of former note, now more or less fallen into decay, may be mentioned Kertch, the ancient Panticapæum; the tumuli that mark the sites of Nymphæum and Kimmericum; Kaffa, now called by its old Greek name of Theodosia, the headquarters for centuries of the power of Genoa in the Euxine; Saduk, which, as Soldaya, was for long a bone of contention between that republic and Venice; and more inland, Stari-Krim, the seat of the Tartar khans before they removed their capital to Baktchi-Serai. Kertch is still a place of some trade; indeed, after the fall of Sevastopol, it became the chief emporium of the Crimea. But the modern "Russified" town contains scarcely any trace of the Milesian city which became the seat and the burial-place of Mithridates, the conqueror of Greece and Scythia, and at a later date the capital of the renowned Kingdom of the Bosphorus, for many centuries the Great Power in the Black Sea. Above the town, on the "Golden Mountain," the last spur of the Tauric Alps, are the remains of the Acropolis—the "arm-chair of Mithridates"—and from thence, looking eastward, may be surveyed the mounds strewn with broken pottery and funeral urns, and fragments of walls and gateways, underneath which lie buried the glories of Panticapæum.

Theodosia has still a population of nearly ten thou-

sand souls, and a considerable trade. Here there are no relics of the Grecian era; for, as Mr. Seymour says in his "*Russia on the Black Sea*," during "a period of ten centuries the plough passed over the site of Theodosia." But when, at the close of the thirteenth century, the Genoese purchased the spot from the Tartars, and obtained the monopoly of the Crimean trade, the still more splendid city of Kaffa arose, and took the place of Panticapæum as the beacon of civilization in the Euxine.

So rich and populous did the city become, that it was known as the "Crimean Stamboul;" and even after it had been bombarded and taken in 1475 by a great Turkish fleet of four hundred and eighty-two sail, and the Italian colonists had been slaughtered or sold into slavery, it is said to have possessed under the Tartar regime no fewer than eighty thousand inhabitants and an almost unrivalled trade. Barbarous "improvements" by its latest masters have worked terrible havoc among the antiquities of Theodosia. "Of all the splendid edifices of the Genoese colony," says Mr. Seymour, "only two churches have escaped the Russian vandalism, having been granted to the Catholics and Armenians, and preserved by them. In spite, however, of the depredations of the authorities and the stupid ignorance of the governors, Kaffa has never been completely metamorphosed into a Russian town. Its principal monuments have been demolished, its walls razed to the ground, its later population expelled, but the general appearance of the town, the private dwellings, the streets paved with large flags, all announce a different people."

It should not be omitted to state, when speaking of the remains of Hellenic and Italian colonization in the

Crimea, that many observers have noticed traits of character and physique in the rural population, now speaking the Tartar tongue and professing the Mohammedan faith, that have led them to believe that the old Greek and Genoese colonists were not exterminated, but were blended with their Mussulman conquerors.

Westward of Saduk—the capital of the Cumanians, when that roaming people were the masters of Southern Russia—antiquarian lore becomes forgotten in the increasing loveliness and wildness of the scenery. Here, and for nearly a hundred miles along the Crimean coast, is the “Garden” of Russia. Nearer and nearer to the Euxine approaches the *Yaila*—the lofty table-lands forming the crest of the Tauric Alps; and as the strip of land between the mountains and the ocean grows narrower with each mile of westing, the country becomes more abrupt, broken, and rugged, and at the same time more verdurous.

It has been compared to the finest bits of the coasts of Italy or of Greece. In many places it resembles a prolonged “Trosachs,” but with rocks and trees on a grander scale than in the Highland pass, with a southern stamp of vegetation, and with a sparkling blue sea showing itself at intervals on the one hand, and hills towering to twice the height of Ben Venue on the other. The sea generally washes the bases of tall cliffs of schistose rock; higher up the slope come sandstone formations; and above all, the limestone of which these mountains are mainly composed. Each of these belts has its own peculiarities of soil and productions, but all, except the higher summits, are clothed in a rich garment of green, sometimes so dense and so intermingled with

crag and boulder, and broken up by gorges, as to form a "labyrinth of verdure."

Of late years much has been done by human skill and taste to increase the natural loveliness of this Russian paradise. In the reign of the late Emperor it became the chosen retreat, during a great part of the year, of the Imperial Court; and the great families of the realm followed suit, and spent enormous sums in acquiring property and building magnificent villas under the shadow of the Tchatir Dag, and in the exalted neighbourhood of the Czar's palace at Livadia. Some of the most notable personages in Russian history have left the impress of their tastes and their eccentricities on the mansions and pleasure-grounds that stud even the most rugged portions of these Southern Crimean shores; and memories of the Potemkins, Richelieus, Vorontzofs, Galitzins, Naryshkins, De Witts, Potockis, Diebitchs, and others whose names are continually appearing in the later annals of the empire, are met with every few miles. Utility has been combined with beauty; and the vineyards, which are so sedulously cultivated, now yield a considerable revenue to their noble possessors, and the Crimean wines are known over the length and breadth of Russia.

The whole district is now easily accessible both by land and water; for in addition to the railway facilities and the fine road which for many years has traversed the coast region, steamers ply regularly to Alushta, Yalta, and other little towns on the coast, and bring crowds of visitors and sightseers of much humbler rank than the high-born personages who formerly monopolized all the delights of this genial clime. The pretty

little town of Yalta is the headquarters of these birds of passage. It is a regularly-organized "tourists' town," having its hotels with French *cuisine*, its esplanade, and its sea-bathing apparatus. A little to the eastward of Yalta are the imperial "Botanical Gardens," which are described as "a vast establishment for experiments on acclimatization and practical studies on the plants and trees which might be profitably introduced into the Crimea."

A few miles to the westward and we reach Livadia, a small Greek village, close to which, as most people know, are situated the charming grounds and tasteful palace which Alexander II. made his resort whenever he could escape from the too cumbrous and ceremonious grandeur of the Winter Palace at St. Petersburg. The original royal residence in this district was a mile or so off at Orianda. Nicolas built a huge pile (lately burned to the ground), well according with the mind of that "Don Quixote of autocracy." This is now the property of the Grand Duke Constantine; and the present Palace of Livadia was only purchased in 1861, on the death of its owner, Count Potocki, and presented by the State to the late Empress. Great sums have since been expended in its improvement.

It is built in the Oriental style of architecture, and ornamented after the model of the palace of the old khans of Crim Tartary at Baktchi-Serai. Within, all the furnishings and decorations are chaste, simple, and elegant; while the parks, gardens, and vineyards surrounding the palace are laid out with the most exquisite taste. Neither in extent nor magnificence, however, can the imperial residence compare with the vast Moorish palace

—the work of an English architect—built at Alupka, a few miles farther to the west, and under the frowning front of Aïpetry, which rises behind almost perpendicularly to a height of three thousand seven hundred and ninety-eight feet. The late Prince Vorontzof, Governor-General of New Russia and Lieutenant of the Caucasus, entertained the Prince and Princess of Wales at Alupka in 1869, and two wellingtonias in the gardens of the palace were planted by their Royal Highnesses as memorials of their visit to the Crimea. There are other mansions and castles on the same coast that scarcely yield in beauty of situation or surroundings to Livadia or to Alupka.

At the extreme south-western corner of the Crimea is the Pass of Phoros, or the "Gate of Baidar," where, by a steep ascent through a defile, a projecting spur of the mountains is crossed, and the region of "perpetual spring" is left behind. A fine macadamized road is now carried over the pass; but half a century ago, when Dr. Henderson visited this region, the traveller bound eastwards had to scramble at the peril of his neck down a series of "prodigious natural stairs," well deserving the name of the "Devil's Staircase." The charms of the coast scenery are not lost sight of at Phoros; on the contrary, immediately below it opens up the famous Valley of Baidar, which has been extolled as the "Crimean Tempe," and where, says Seymour, the cottages of the Tartar villagers are "overshadowed by an exuberant vegetation of the walnut, the mulberry, the vine, the fig, the olive, the pomegranate, the peach, the apricot, the plum, the cherry, and the tall black poplar; all of which, intermingling their clustering

produce, form the most beautiful and fragrant canopies that can be imagined."

The land now, however, begins to have a western exposure, and the mountains no longer wholly shut out the winter blasts from these delicious scenes. Frost and snow pay visits to the luxuriant Vale of Baidar; and still more rigorous, as we know to our cost, is the winter climate on the bare plains immediately adjoining, between the land-locked harbour of Balaclava and the long inlet on the southern shore of which are the ruins of the fortress of Sevastopol. For we have now reached a corner of the Crimea which no Englishman can regard without feelings of pride and sadness. Here was the arena where the deadly struggle was fought out between the Western Powers of Europe and the "Colossus of the North," while the whole world looked breathlessly on. Here French *élan* and stubborn British valour were pitted in not unequal combat against the patient, stoical resolution of the Russian defenders; and the engineering skill of Todleben, and the heroism of Istomin, Kornilof, and Nakhimof, kept at bay for nearly twelve months the most determined assaults of the Allies, but could not avert the humiliation of Russia and the destruction for the time of her far-reaching plans on the Black Sea.

Sevastopol, as has been said, is built on the southern side of the long deep haven which, with the inlet of Balaclava, helps to form the Heracleotic Chersonesus, and occupies the shores of two branch creeks that run in between the high stony ridges of which the peninsula is formed. Eupatoria, where the allied forces landed on the 14th September 1854, is sixty miles to the north-

ward; and the heights of Alma, where, six days later, the battle was fought that opened the way to Sevastopol. lies about half-way between the two places. Marching round the head of the bay, and crossing at this point the Tchernaiia, flowing between the steep ridges and cliffs of Inkerman, honeycombed with the dwellings of the ancient cave-dwellers, the invaders took up their positions on the landward side of the fortress,—the British troops with their base on Balaclava, and the French to the eastward, near the site of ancient Chersonesus.

It is not necessary to recount in detail the incidents of that memorable siege—how the defenders sunk their fleet at the entrance of the harbour, between the great batteries of Forts Constantine and Alexander, on which the fire of the allied fleet was directed, and laboured night and day raising new redoubts and earthworks; how the besiegers gradually drew the lines of trenches nearer, while beating off the assaults of the land army under Gortschakof at Balaclava and at Inkerman, and enduring the cruel privations of the terrible winter of 1854–5; and how a hotter and ever hotter rain of shot and shell was directed upon the doomed city, until, on the 8th September 1855, the Malakof redoubt having been carried by the French, the Russian flag was hauled down and the heroic defence was at an end. “In the last twenty-eight days of the siege,” says Rambaud, “the Russians lost eighteen thousand men by the bombardment alone; a million and a half of bullets, bombs, shells, and grenades had been thrown into the town.” In one single day seventy thousand projectiles were thrown into Sevastopol, and the thunder of the cannonade was heard for sixty miles around. One of the most singular



illustrations of the enormous waste of money and material during the siege is the fact mentioned by Sir E. J. Reed, that the Russian Government, by imposing a tax of six-pence per hundredweight on the "old metal" picked up by the townspeople after the bombardment, were able to realize the handsome sum of £15,000.

The town of Sevastopol is slowly clearing away the wreck, and recovering some of its former trade and importance. Its population, however, is still probably not half what it was before the siege; and it is doubtful whether it will ever again be the formidable naval and military stronghold which it was previous to 1854.

At the time of Mr. Reed's visit in 1875, the destruction that had befallen this fair city—"fair by the beauty of its site, the glory of its climate, and the magnificence of its edifices"—was not obvious at first sight to one approaching from seaward. The noble flight of landing stairs, called after the great Catherine who founded the town near the site of the squalid Tartar village of Aktiar, and formed the scheme of making it the nucleus of Russian power on the Black Sea, and the columned portico, the statues, and the monuments to which they lead, are almost uninjured. But as you penetrate into the town, tokens meet you at every step of the ruin and desolation caused by the "iron shower" which so long beat down upon the city from the heights above, while as seen from the hills themselves the view is "simply appalling."

The signs of the presence of the armies which so long marched and countermarched, and fought, and dug trenches and laid mines, on this bare plateau, are rapidly being obliterated by the hand of time. The

position of the different camps is chiefly to be distinguished by the remains of provision tins and broken bottles. Other memorials there are, however, which will always be places of pilgrimage to those of our countrymen who visit the Crimea—the cemeteries in which rest the bones of the valiant British dead and of their gallant allies and enemies.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### NEW RUSSIA AND ITS PORTS.



THE first naval success of the Russians was won in Black Sea waters—or, more properly speaking, in the Sea of Azov—when, at the capture of the fortress of Azov in 1696 by Peter the Great, part of the flotilla which 'had been built at Voronej seized and sank a number of Turkish galleys at the mouth of the Don. That was the first "palpable hit" in the return innings which Russia has now been playing against the Turk for two hundred years past, the latest additions to its long score of triumphs securing the retrocession of Bessarabia and the establishment of the Czar's authority from the Danube to Batoum.

That earliest little gleam of victory opened up the prospect of a new source of strength. Ambition and necessity have gone hand in hand, and the rulers of Russia have never missed an opportunity of extending their sway over the countries of the Black Sea, and building up in these comparatively open waters a formidable naval power. The Empresses Anne and Elizabeth in their time made large additions to their territory in this direction, and prepared still more

effectually for the end by breaking the power of the Cossack republics, and settling in the steppes skirting Turkey and Little Tartary colonies of refugees and immigrants of many nationalities—Greeks, Georgians, Servians, Wallachians, and Hungarians—all united in their hatred of the Mussulman, and ready to take up sword at any moment against their old oppressors.

It was reserved, however, to the Empress Catherine to deal the decisive blow. It was in her time that the Zaporogian *setch* on the cataracts of the Dnieper was finally suppressed, and the remnants of that freebooting brotherhood were banished to the eastern shore of the Sea of Azov, where they now form the community of the "Cossacks of the Black Sea." Her great commanders beat back the Turk beyond the Dniester, and put an end to the Crimean khanate. Thenceforth an era of peaceful progress began for Southern Russia, and continued almost unchecked down to our own day, even during the times when war has been raging on both flanks of the newly-acquired territory.

There is nothing elsewhere in Europe to compare with the marvellous rapidity with which the soil of this "New Russia"—so long a mere field for hostile armies marching across and fighting in—has been occupied and brought under cultivation, and wealthy commercial cities have sprung up in the bare steppe or on the deserted inlets of the Black Sea. For an analogy, we must go to America or to our own Australian colonies.

In this region we must not look for venerable churches and other monuments of ancient culture. The chief antiquities are those relics of Scythian and other nomad peoples long since disappeared that are found buried

under the tumuli that everywhere break the otherwise level plains. Civilization here is barely a century old, and is not yet fully acclimatized. Country life, like country scenery, is bald and uninteresting. The towns have only two titles on which they can base their claims to notice. Either they are strong fortresses—such as Kishenef, Bender, Akerman, Otchakov, and Kinburn—about which cling memories of famous episodes in military and naval history; or they are flourishing emporiums of trade—depôts like Balta, Nicopol, Elizabetgrad, and Ekaterinoslav—where the wheat, oats, and rye, the timber, linseed, and hemp, the wool, tallow, and hides, and other products of Russia, are collected; or seaports—like Odessa, Nicolaiev, and Kherson on the Black Sea, and Berdiansk, Marioupol, Taganrog, and Rostov on the Sea of Azov—where these homely but valuable articles are shipped to Western Europe.

Sometimes, as in the cases of Nicolaiev and Kherson, commerce and war have combined to give importance to these new cities. The two last-mentioned ports are both reached by the wide estuary formed by the union of the Dnieper and the Boug, the entrance to which is defended on either side by the fortresses of Otchakov and Kinburn, both much spoken of during the Crimean War, and by a large “midwater” battery. Nicolaiev, since the fall of Sevastopol the imperial naval station on the Black Sea, is situated some twenty miles up the Boug, a deep magnificent river a mile and a half broad. Kherson is forty miles distant on the still larger stream of the Dnieper, here spread over many miles and flowing between numerous islands.

It was at Kherson where Catherine may be said to

have laid the corner-stone of the Russian power in the Black Sea, though Ekaterinoslav—the “glory of Catherine”—and the Greek colony of Marioupol were founded in the same year—1778. It was the handiwork of the magnificent imperial favourite Prince Potemkin, the “Creator of New Russia,” the conqueror of the Turks, and the subjugator of the Taurida. The site was chosen and the name conferred because it was then supposed that it was here, and not, as we have seen is the case, at Sevastopol, where the ancient Greek metropolis of Chersonesus had stood. Here was founded, on a humble enough scale, the nucleus of the Black Sea navy, which now embraces some of the most formidable and ponderous “floating citadels” that modern ingenuity has constructed.

When Catherine made her progress through her recently conquered domains, in extraordinary state and splendour, christening new towns and organizing vast provinces on her march, receiving the homage of Polish pans and Tartar princes, and waited upon by no less a personage than the Emperor Joseph II. of Austria, she made Kherson her headquarters for nearly a week.

Already the town, though only “a child of eight years,” had made wonderful progress. The Czarina, entering the city through a gateway on which were written, in Greek characters, the words, “*By this the way leads to Byzantium*,” was amazed to find that a large population—including skilled carpenters, blacksmiths, and other artisans, attracted thither from all parts of Europe—had been settled in this desolate spot; that military buildings, storehouses, and a cathedral had been built of freestone; that a dockyard

had been constructed, and three large vessels of war were on the stocks ; that the trade of the place was increasing in "leaps and bounds," and the Russian flag already floated in the harbour of Marseilles. Sumptuous were the fêtes held in her honour, and great the rewards reaped by Potemkin and his helpers from their imperious but indulgent mistress.

In the Cathedral of St. Catherine the body of Potemkin was buried by the direction of the Empress ; but her successor, Paul, who systematically threw disgrace on all that his mother delighted to honour, ordered the bones of the founder of Kherson to be exhumed, and huddled away in an obscure nook, where they no doubt rest as peacefully as under their massive sarcophagus.

On the outskirts of the town is a monument which begets quite other memories—that of the prison philanthropist Howard. It is a simple pyramid, standing in the midst of a bare plain, and surrounded by a dilapidated wall and a few poplar trees. By last accounts it presented an appearance of sad neglect and decay, a melancholy reflection on the gratitude of mankind, in whose cause Howard toiled so zealously. He died here in 1790—a year before Potemkin—not from having caught jail-fever while engaged in his humane labours, but from having caught cold by indiscreetly riding out in thin pumps and light evening dress to an evening entertainment in the neighbourhood.

Kherson to-day has a population of about fifty thousand souls. Its commerce is extensive, and on the whole increasing ; but younger rivals, more favourably situated, have robbed it of its former predominance. Nicolaiev is now the chief naval station on the Black

Sea; and Odessa has long been the principal sea-port of Southern Russia. When the Russians captured the strong fort of Otchakov, on the feast-day of St. Nicolas, 1789, inflicting a loss of twenty thousand men on the Turks, it was thought only due to the saint for his services to name a town in his honour. Accordingly, Nicolaiev rose. From the first it was designed to be the headquarters of the Russian fleet in the Euxine, and for long it was nothing other than a vast arsenal and dépôt of naval and military stores. Latterly, however, it has been doing an extensive trade in the export of grain and other produce, and threatening to become a formidable rival to Odessa.

Great quantities of shipbuilding timber are brought thither down the Dnieper and Boug; and from the earliest days of its existence Nicolaiev has had a large share in the construction of the Russian men-of-war. From the first wooden frigate built here ninety years ago, to the circular ironclads launched under the superintendence of Admiral Popoff and the Grand Duke Constantine, late Lord High Admiral of the Russian fleet, its dockyards have supplied illustrations of all the changes which modern science and ingenuity have effected in naval warfare.

The late Emperor and other members of the Russian imperial family exhibited a warm interest in naval affairs, and have repeatedly taken up their residence for a short time at Nicolaiev. Evidence of the kindly concern shown for the comfort and improvement of the Russian soldier and sailor may be observed on all hands;—in the fine “Naval Hospital,” which Sir E. J. Reed considered to be unequalled by any institution of



the kind he had seen elsewhere ; in the elementary and technical schools, reading-rooms, etc., attached to the barracks ; and, more especially, by a visit to the Leski quarter, where cottages and plots of ground are allotted rent free, or, under certain conditions, as freeholds, to officers and seamen invalided by wounds or by age, and where, among other means of recreation provided for these disabled "tars," are a beautiful park and pleasure-grounds.

The Leski quarter was originally the idea of Admiral Greig, one of the many distinguished officers of English extraction who have served in the Russian navy. Few families have done more for the improvement of Russian administration in the naval and in other services than the Greigs, the head of which house was lately in charge of the Imperial Ministry of Finance. To them, among other debts, Nicolaiev owes its fine lines of boulevards, and other improvements in its streets and buildings which make it one of the handsomest cities in Russia.

The town has the natural advantage of being built on a healthy and elevated site, overlooking the confluence of two noble rivers—the Boug and the Jugul. The broad and regularly-built streets, and extensive gardens and parks, cover an enormous extent of ground ; and the handsome structures, the Cathedral, Town House, Admiralty, Observatory, and other public buildings detach themselves as prominently from the ranks of the one-storied brick houses around them as the huge hulls of the "popoffkas," and other war-ships which make Nicolaiev their rendezvous, predominate over the merchant shipping in the docks and harbour.

Seventy miles farther to the south-westward, over a

steppe as dreary and barren of interest as that between Perecop and Kherson, or between Kherson and Nicolaiev, and intersected by long, narrow salt lagoons and marshes, is the great trading city of Odessa, the second commercial port in Russia. Like Kherson and Nicolaiev, it marks an immense stride in the progress of the Russian arms and influence in the direction of Constantinople. Like them, it has sprung up within a hundred years, absolutely from nothing; for when Suvaroff's most sanguinary feat of arms, the capture of Ismail, had in 1790 laid Turkey practically at Catherine's feet, and opened the way to the Treaty of Jassy, by which the lands between the Boug and the Dniester were ceded to Russia, there were only a miserable cluster of Tartar hovels and the small fort of Hadji Bey near the site where now stands the fourth city in point of population in the empire. It was only in 1794 that the Admiral de Ribas, who had captured the Turkish fort, and who was the first Russian commandant, was granted permission to found a commercial town at the bay adjoining the estuary of the Dniester.

The true era of Odessa's prosperity, however, dates from 1804, when the Duke de Richelieu, the first Governor-General of New Russia, took up his residence here. Odessa owes at least as much to this distinguished French *émigré* as Kherson does to Potemkin or Nicolaiev to Greig. Odessa formed itself under his hands; the features which distinguish it from other Russian towns—that cheerful “civilized” aspect which gives a stranger the impression that he is in a mercantile city of Western Europe—were stamped on it by Richelieu. He laid out, paved, and lighted the principal

streets ; built a quarantine in the old fortress, a mole, and warehouses ; instituted a bank, a bourse, a tribunal of commerce, and a theatre ; organized a postal system and scientific and industrial schools ; settled the town and suburbs with skilled artisans and other immigrants from the West ; and, in a word, promoted everything that tended to develop the intellectual and commercial activity of the place. During the fourteen years of his administration the population increased from nine thousand to thirty thousand ; and its wealth and trade, under the encouragement of the special privileges which it possessed as a free port, had developed in still greater proportion. It is told, in proof of the generous and disinterested spirit in which the first governor of New Russia worked, that when he left Odessa he carried with him only "a small portmanteau, containing his uniform and a couple of shirts."

Another great benefactor of Odessa, whose labours are also extant in the substantial form of valuable and handsome public buildings and works, was Prince Vorontzof. Odessa has not been ungrateful. The two chief monuments which the town possesses are statues of Richelieu and Vorontzof. The Lyceum, founded by Richelieu, has developed into the University of Odessa, one of the most important educational institutions in Russia. A great place of public resort is the "Duke's Garden," which was laid out by the direction of Vorontzof, who also built the Great Staircase, which leads from the level of the harbour to the summit of the limestone cliff on which the city stands. Lines of poplars forming a boulevard skirt the cliff and traverse the city in various directions ; and though the soil and climate are not

favourable to vegetation, the handsome suburbs and country houses clustering around the town have a fair sprinkling of trees. In the centre of the town another oasis of green surrounds the cathedral, in the "Grand Place;" but Odessa in the summer, in spite of all that has been done for it, is a hot, arid, and dusty place, while at other seasons the unpaved back streets, like those of the other towns of New Russia through which we have passed, are almost impassable with mud.

Singular is the collection of nationalities to be met with in the streets and quays of Odessa, and stupifying the Babel of tongues to be heard in its bazaars and exchanges; even in the theatre, plays in three or four different languages are produced and understood. Odessa is the outlet for the products of a great part of Little Russia, Poland, and Galicia, as well as of the neighbouring districts of New Russia. Representatives of all the races inhabiting these border countries visit its market-places to buy or to sell, and to mingle with the throng of sailors of different nations, who have strolled carelessly thither from the harbour in search of amusement, or with Greek, Armenian, Italian, and Jewish traders who are here, eagerly intent on business.

The province of Bessarabia alone furnishes the Odessa bazaars with a strange medley of languages and costumes—Roumanian peasants and German colonists with fruit and grain from the villages that nestle in charming valleys, bounded by broad hilly spurs, between the Dniester and the Pruth; Jewish dealers in wool or flax from the capital town of Kishinef, which already reckons over one hundred thousand inhabitants; Bulgarian, Serbian, and Greek cultivators with the produce of their

little fields ; Cossacks and Tartars from the flat marshy tracts along the Pruth or at the mouths of the Danube ; most noticeable of all, the Tsiganis or gipsies, who while leading as usual a wandering life, moving with tents and waggons from town to town, and subsisting by juggling, fortune-telling, and partly by pilfering, have managed to preserve here more than elsewhere the customs, dress, and beliefs which they are supposed to have originally brought from India.

It is the Jews, however, who put in motion and who regulate the currents of business life that set to and from Odessa. In the city their numbers have been estimated at sixty thousand. Deprived of Jewish enterprise and capital, the trade of New Russia would collapse. They show an example of thrift and sobriety which their Christian neighbours are slow to imitate ; and to the jealousy and hatred aroused by the spectacle of their superior talents and wealth are to be attributed the scenes of riot and outrage that have recently disgraced Odessa and other towns in this region.

During the Russo-Turkish War, when the Bosphorus was blockaded by the Turks, the trade of Odessa was temporarily paralyzed. The extraordinary development of the American grain traffic has also had a material effect on the business of the Black Sea. There is little danger, however, of the commerce of this great city retrograding. Its inhabitants already number nearly two hundred thousand ; the value of its trade is estimated at many millions sterling a year ; there are still unlimited capabilities for growth in the countries behind it ; and its progress in the future will probably be scarcely less remarkable than in the past.

The harbours in the Sea of Azov have the advantage over Odessa and its neighbour ports on the Black Sea proper, in being nearer to the great centres of Russian wealth and population on the Volga. But there are other circumstances that much more than neutralize the shorter land carriage between Taganrog and the "granary of Russia."

First, the shifting sandbars of the Strait of Yenikale have to be passed before the shallow half-fresh waters of the "*Palus Mæotis*" are reached. Skilful piloting is needed in threading a way between the shoals, and making headway against the currents which set from the mouths of the Don and from the outlet of the "*Sivash*" towards the Strait. Long peninsulas—mere spits of sand or mud—project into the turbid waters or line the coasts, the most remarkable being the Peninsula or "arrow" of Arabat, which for forty miles interposes a barrier between the "*Putrid Sea*" and the Sea of Azov.

In other places abrupt cliffs of sandstone or marshes line the shore. Everywhere, however, the environs of this shallow, muddy basin of brackish water are flat and stale, though not unprofitable; for on both shores of the Gulf of the Don especially fine crops of grain are raised, and large flocks of cattle are reared by the Cossack communities on the eastern coast. Berdiansk is the only decent port, and even that harbour is rapidly silting up. Vessels trading to the higher ports in the Sea of Azov have to lie several miles off-shore and take on board cargo. There is hardly any import trade, and the ballast is generally flung overboard, and helps to increase that accumulation of rubbish with which the Sea

of Azov is gradually choking itself. When a strong wind is blowing from the northward, the water near Taganrog is sometimes forced bodily off-shore, leaving a great expanse of sand and mud, with vessels sticking in it like flies in a pot of honey. Then for many months the greater part of the sea is frozen over; and immense hummocks and ridges of ice, "as high as a house," give the *Palus Mæotis* the appearance of an inlet of the Polar Ocean. Mr. Seymour says that in 1854 a "regular mountain-chain, many miles in length," stretched partly across the entrance to the Gulf of the Don, and that an English vessel that had been lost there for several weeks "was only discovered by one of her masts sticking above the ridge."

The most notable places in the Sea of Azov are clustered about the mouths of the Don—Azov, the scene of Peter the Great's first success over the Turks, near which was the site of the old Greek colony of Tanais; the seaport of Taganrog, first founded by Peter so early as 1706, rebuilt by Catherine in 1769, and the place where the Emperor Alexander I. died in 1824; and lastly Rostov, like Taganrog, the seat of a large trade in grain, tallow, wool, and fish. There is little otherwise noticeable about these busy towns, except perhaps that the mud and filth accumulated in their streets are somewhat above the average, even for Russian cities.

To reach Rostov we must ascend one of the channels of the Don, between reedy islands and mud-banks, to the head of the delta. Except in the season of floods, the Don is a shallow stream, with a volume of water ridiculously out of proportion to the great length of its course and to the breadth of its shingly channel. It is navi-

gated by flat-bottomed steamboats, drawing only a couple of feet of water ; and Mr. Mackenzie Wallace says that on each voyage a free passage is given to a number of Cossacks, on the understanding that when the vessel runs aground, as is constantly happening, it becomes their duty to get into the water and haul her off by main strength. He mentions also that the steamer by which he was travelling had on one occasion to come to a dead halt, in order not to run down a mounted Cossack, who was leisurely crossing her bows in wading from bank to bank ; and that a passenger, finding that no stop was to be made at his village, quietly slipped over the side and walked ashore.

These Cossack villages or *stanitzas* are dotted at intervals along the margin of the Don. Their inhabitants divide their time between the sturgeon and other fisheries, agriculture, and military life. The old military organization of the Don Cossacks has been in a large measure broken down of recent years. There is no longer an ataman or "hetman" at Tcherkask clothed with semi-independent power ; the civil and military officials alike receive their appointments in the ordinary way ; and the Cossacks of the Don are simply a community of agriculturists, holding their lands on condition of military service when called upon, and thus forming an irregular cavalry force which is a powerful and valuable adjunct to the Russian army. The Cossack frontiersmen are scattered along the whole southern margin of Russia from the Danube to Behring Strait ; and besides their uses in actual war, especially in such duties as scouting and foraging, they serve as a police force for overawing and keeping in order the tribes



which have only recently come under Russian rule. In times of peace they break up new soil and raise large quantities of grain, though the roving instincts inherited from their forefathers make them disinclined to devote themselves steadily to agriculture, when it is possible to make a living by hunting or by fishing.

Each group of Cossack communities—there are some dozen of them in all—has had its own special origin, history, and organization. The Cossacks of the Don are the most numerous of all, and have been longest under settled government. Their stage of civilization differs little from that of the ordinary Russian peasant. They are perhaps better educated and more intelligent, and more cleanly in their houses and persons, than their fellow-countrymen who are impressed into the regular army. They are, as a rule, taller in stature and more powerful in frame; “schism” has made wider progress among them,—in fact they are *raskolniks* almost to a man; and in their costume and many of their habits they differ from the ordinary Russians. In the main, however, they are the same race, mingled in the course of centuries with infusions of Tartar, Polish, and Circassian blood, and modified by the wilder and freer life of the steppe.

Their capital, Novo-Tcherkask, stands on high ground on the banks of two little streams, and commands a wide view of the valley of the Don, which flows close at hand, and of the level plains stretching to the eastward. The headquarters of the Don Cossacks were removed to Novo-Tcherkask from the old town of Tcherkask, built on a muddy island in the Don, and subject to periodical inundations, in the time of the famous hetman Platoff, whose palace and the triumphal arch at

the entrance to the broad main thoroughfare are the chief architectural features of the new city. The list of the public buildings of New Tcherkask—which include, besides schools, churches, and hospital, a club-house and a theatre—shows what progress these rough-riders of the Don, who were only brought under subjection in the time of Peter the Great, are making in modern art and taste. In spite of these attractions, of its wide clean streets, and of the neighbouring vineyards which yield the celebrated wine of the Don, Novo-Tcherkask is too parched and dusty, too exposed to violent vicissitudes of temperature, to be an ideal place of residence.


Next neighbours to the Cossacks of the Don are the Tchernomorski—the Cossacks of the Black Sea—who hold the plains on the eastern side of the Sea of Azov and along the course of the Kuban river up to the very base of the chain of the Caucasus. These are descendants of the Zaporogian bands of the Dnieper, the remnants of which were deported hither a century ago. Their later experiences have not been so conducive to peaceful industry as have those of their kinsmen on the Don. Many a sharp brush have they had with the Tcherkess and other tribes of the Caucasus, in the memory of men who are not yet past middle age; and the neighbourhood of their capital, Ekaterinodar, on the banks of the Kuban, has been recommended as the most likely place extant for collecting materials for an authentic modern tale of adventure of the Fenimore Cooper class.

The Black Sea Cossacks are not particularly fond of tilling the land; but they rear large flocks of cattle and sheep; they are successful fishers, and daring hunters of the wild boar, the wolf, and the bear.

Between the mouths of the Kuban is a singular island or peninsula—it is difficult to say which—that stretches out towards the Strait of Yenikale. Here are the little town of Taman, and many small fishing-villages on the bights, sand-spits, and creeks that intersect this maze of fresh and salt water, marsh and dry land ; and here, on the site of an early Greek colony, within view of the capital of the Bosphorus on the Crimean side of the strait, and almost under the shadow of Mount Elburz, Mstislaf, son of St. Vladimir, more than eight hundred years ago, founded the Russ state of Tmoutarakan, and was the ancestor of a line of Russ princes who, centuries before St. Petersburg or even Moscow had been heard of, carried on wars with Huns and Avars, entered into alliances with the Greek emperors to destroy the Khazar kingdom, then all-powerful between the Black Sea and the Caspian, and thus were the pioneers of Slavonic aggression in the Caucasus, and paved the way for the more abiding conquests that were to come.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE CAUCASUS AND TRANSCAUCASIA.

EW parts of the great plains of Russia are more empty, desolate, and "monotonous with an intensity almost rising into grandeur," than the steppes lying between the mouths of the Don and the Caspian. The traveller bound southward can now take advantage of the line of railway which, passing through Novo-Tcherkask, is carried on, past Stavropol, as far as to Vladikavkas, at the entrance to the defile of Dariel, and at no distant date, no doubt, will be continued to Tiflis, the capital of the Russian territories in the Caucasus. But under whatever conditions the journey is made, the landscape of these "Sarmatian wastes" becomes insupportably tiresome long before it is over. One does not wonder that the Sauromati, the Alans, and the Huns, who of old had these plains as their inheritance, did not make them an abiding resting-place, but hastened on to more smiling regions in Poland and Germany; or that their modern conquerors, the Russians, have left them pretty much to the occupation of Kalmuks and Tartars, and, placing a Cossack cordon to watch over these nomad tribes, have also pushed forward to fairer scenes beyond.

The posting-stations are few and far between, and the fare and lodging bare and rude as the surrounding wilderness. In summer the dust and heat are stifling: the sun shines down on the burnt-up herbage, and the atmosphere is like the air over a furnace, and the level surface seems to throb and palpitate with the heat. In winter time the cold is as excessive. The traveller buries himself in his heap of furs, knowing that exposure even for a few minutes will lay him open to the risk of frost-bite.

Perhaps one of the storms that are common in this region suddenly sweeps down and envelops the sledge and horses in clouds of powdery snow. On such occasions, even with the most skilful "*yemstchik*," the danger of losing the way and being buried in the snow-drift is no mere imaginary terror. Describing these winter hurricanes, which are known to the natives of the steppe as the "*boura*" or "*metel*," Mr. Seymour says:—"When the wind blows with violence, and the snow is drifted about in eddies, the storm has a singularly bewildering and stunning effect. The inhabitants themselves lose their way; and the herds of horses, cattle, and sheep that happen to be surprised by it become seized with a panic, and rushing headlong before the gale, defy every obstacle that presents itself to their wild career. They are then inevitably lost; and overcome by fatigue, they either perish in the snow, or meet their death by falling down the precipitous side of some ravine."

The night brings little comfort to make amends for the fatigues of the day; for the company that share with the traveller the shelter of the little Cossack station are more noisy than select, and insect life is active and

abundant. But some fine morning he awakens to discover that he has reached the confines of a new land—a region of sublimity and romance. Rugged hills rise ahead in loftier and loftier tiers, separated by valleys clad with trees—the first wood met with for five hundred or six hundred miles—and by cold mountain streams, branches of the Kuban or the Terek. The next stage brings him to thriving Cossack, Russian, and German colonies sheltering themselves behind these slopes, amid cornfields and vineyards; or perhaps to a health-resort, with hotel and baths clustered round a mineral spring in approved European fashion. High above all rise the gleaming summits of a mountain chain, grouped about some giant, like Elburz or Kazbek, raising itself, a stupendous pyramid of snow, to a height of two thousand or three thousand feet above the highest peak of the Swiss Alps. It is the Caucasus.

This great mountain range stretches from the Euxine to the Caspian waters, like a barrier between Europe and Asia, for a length of eight hundred miles. Its highest peaks are near its central region, and the general elevation diminishes on either side as it approaches its two bounding seas, into each of which it projects a sort of outwork in the form of a peninsula. The general direction, as any map will show, is not directly across the narrowest part of the isthmus, but transversely, in a west-north-west to east-south-east direction, thus leaving at either extremity a tract of mountainous country—Abkhasia on the west, and Daghestan on the east—wedged in between the main ridge of the Caucasus and the sea, and traversed only by a narrow, and on the Black Sea coast almost impracticable, pass between the

hills and the water, into which the cliffs suddenly shelve down.

Other remarkable features of the Caucasian chain are its comparative isolation from other mountain systems, the absence of lakes, the steepness of its acclivity, especially on the northern side, the compactness of its mass—its subsidiary spurs and offshoots being of small extent, and its greatest breadth only about one hundred and fifty miles—and the nature of its “dorsal ridge,” which is composed of two parallel ranges of peaks, not, however, separated by deep valleys, but connected by a lofty table-land, which seems to unite them as summits of one massive mountain.

In the Caucasus is found the highest land in Europe or in Western Asia. Ancients and moderns have alike had their imaginations impressed by its transcendent height, its singular position, and the savage loveliness of its scenery. It has been made a chosen realm of legend and romance. Ea, to which Jason and the Argonauts fared in their quest for the Golden Fleece, has been identified with Kutais, now a Russian military post and trading town, containing little of interest to a modern seeker for adventure. Colchis, where Medea wove her spells and worked her horrid deeds of blood, is thought to correspond with the coast district on either side of the Rion—the ancient Phasis—at the mouth of which stands the port of Poti, now the starting-point of the railway which has already been carried to Tiflis, and will ere long reach Baku on the Caspian. It was to a crag of Elburz, still looking serenely down on Kutais and the Rion valley, or of Kazbek, dominating the Dariel Pass, that Prometheus was chained by the angry

lord of Olympus for bringing down the fire of the gods to earth, while, according to the old myth, Europe and Asia, and the nymphs of the sea and the woods, met to soothe the torments of the benefactor of the race of men.

The Greeks were not the only people to whom the Caucasus, and more especially Elburz, the "shining" or "sublime," were full of awe-inspiring suggestions—associations in which the terrible and beautiful were inextricably mingled. In Arabian legend "beyond Mount Kaf" was the region of mystery and enchantment, where the spells of the genii had full power.

To the Zoroastrians—the fire-worshippers of early Persia—Elburz was the highest and most ancient mountain in the world, and the most sacred spot on earth. It was their Sinai, the mount where Zoroaster received the law. But it was more: they regarded it as "the throne of Ormuzd, the mount of the congregation of the celestial spirits, the pure region of light, where there is neither enemy, darkness, nor death, but all is light, peace, and felicity." "Yonder on Elburz," says the *Zend-Avesta*, "is neither gloomy night nor cold wind, nor heat nor corruption, nor evil, the creature of wicked genii; yonder the enemy dare not ascend as the domineering lord; for yonder walks the great king—the sun—the source of peace and life."

Alas for the ancient faiths! The adorers of the everlasting fire have disappeared in Persia, supplanted and exterminated by the believers in the Prophet and his son-in-law Ali—the Shiite sect of Mohammedans. Our countrymen, Freshfield, Tucker, and Moore, who were the first who succeeded in the attempt to ascend



Elburz, unsustained by the devouring ardour of religious faith, but led on merely by scientific zeal or by traveller's curiosity, discovered no abodes of beneficent spirits; and found darkness—in the shape of fog—cold, and hunger very disagreeable realities. A good spice of danger, also, may be counted upon by the mountain-climber in the Caucasus, not only from the precipices, crevasses, and avalanches of these Alpine heights, but from the brigand tribes that infest the valleys below.

Only at Baku, at the Caspian extremity of the chain, do any traces of the ancient fire-worship survive. The whole peninsula of Apsheron, on which the town of Baku stands, is saturated with naphtha; and the oil, which exudes freely from the soil at various spots, forms the chief riches of the place. One of these "naphtha wells" has sometimes been known to catch fire by accident, and to continue to burn for years, throwing up its pillar of flame to mark the farther outpost of the Caucasus. Occasionally the phenomenon may be witnessed at Baku of a "sea in flames." The oil floats like a scum on the waters near the shore, and on a light being applied to the torpid waves, pale blue flames start up and flicker far and near in snaky undulations over acres of the surface of the Caspian.

A few miles from Baku is the Guebre temple of Atesh-gah, where the eternal fires are fed by the miserable remnant of the worshippers of the source of life and heat that linger in these parts. The temple itself is a small building with crenellated outer walls surrounding a central dome built over the chief altar. Not only upon the altar itself, but from every turret and battlement, and from the ground without and within the

enclosure, gouts of flame rise and burn unceasingly, fed by the naphtha springs below. The priests, or priest—for by last accounts only one remained in charge of the temple—is supported by the alms of the Parsee devotees, who make pilgrimages from places so distant as Bombay and Delhi to the holy fane where the lamp of the ancient faith is still trimmed in the midst of Christian, Mohammedan, and heathen tribes.

The mud volcanoes at Taman, the opposite extremity of the Caucasus, and at points along the range, bear testimony that Plutonic agencies have been at work along its whole length in raising this mighty mountain wall. No active volcanoes exist in the range, but extinct craters and lava streams have been found on Elburz, Kazbek, and other peaks; hot, sulphur, and other mineral springs are common; and the whole region is still subject to earthquake shocks, one of which, in quite recent years, rendered uninhabitable the old city of Shamaka, the capital of the province of Shirvan, where now is the chief seat of the important silkworm-rearing and silk-manufacturing industries of the Caucasus.

The sun does not shine on a land more beautiful and luxuriant than that which lies along the southern slope of the mountains from Shirvan to Circassia. Beneficent Nature seems to have striven to provide a contrast to the cold splendours of the icy peaks and the savage gloom of the "dark Iberian dales" by spreading the whole store of her treasures at the foot of the Caucasian cliffs. Sheltered from the freezing breath of the north wind, and exposed to the fervid rays of a semi-tropical sun, the rugged sides of the mountains are covered with

the most rich and varied vegetation, which struggles up to an extraordinary altitude, and almost mingles with the perpetual snow. Dense forests of the oak, beech, hazel, walnut, cedar, birch, cypress, pine, box, and alder clothe the slopes of the valleys; lower down are waving grain-fields of temperate climes, the olive, the vine, the fig, the melon, the orange, and other fruits of warm latitudes, and crops of tobacco, rice, maize, cotton, sugar, tea, and indigo, that form an important part of the wealth of this greatly favoured land.

The marshy flats near the Caspian are overgrown with a jungly vegetation reminding one of the lowlands of India; and the banks of the Phasis, and other streams in Mingrelia and Imeritia adjoining the Black Sea, are covered with a magnificent semi-tropical forest, wreathed into a nearly impenetrable mass by twining convolvuluses and lianas. Within a distance of a few leagues one seems to pass from Arctic scenery through a temperate clime to almost torrid warmth and luxuriance. Few regions contain such extraordinary richness and variety of plant life; the simple enumeration of the species fills no fewer than eighteen quarto pages of the botanical work of Guldenstadt, who declares that the Caucasus produces everything necessary for the existence and even the luxurious accommodation of man.

Still more strangely assorted are the races inhabiting the Caucasus. Perhaps in no part of the world of equal extent are so many distinct peoples and languages grouped together. It was once a favourite theory that the purest type of the Aryan or Indo-European family of nations—the “Caucasian race”—was to be found in these mountains. That idea has long been exploded.

It arose from the accident that the finest and most characteristic skull in the collection of the German ethnologist Blumenbach was that of a Georgian. Never, probably, as Dr. Latham says, has a single skull brought so much confusion into the domain of science as in this case.

The "Caucasian" is not even the predominating race in the Caucasus. Its peoples are of curiously and obscurely mingled blood, but the Mongolian type is thought to be the prevailing one. This strange assortment of nations has been explained by supposing that after the passing of each of the innumerable Asiatic migrations which have chosen this pathway into Europe, representatives of the races composing it have been left behind, like stranded driftwood on the ebbing of a flood.

The Caucasus might thus be likened to a mighty sieve, through which the peoples of the northern world have been sifted from the earliest times. Tradition connects the range and the neighbouring summits of Ararat with the first peopling of the earth after the Deluge; and its geological formation shows that it must have been one of the earliest mountain upheavals in the Old World. When the "wreck of nations" caught in its intricate valleys and deep woods has been thoroughly and scientifically examined, an important light will doubtless be thrown on the origin, primitive condition, and prehistoric wanderings of mankind.

It has been proposed by Dr. Latham to group the inhabitants of the Caucasus under the title of "Dioscurian," for the quaint reason that at Dioscurias, one of the principal early Greek settlements on the Colchian coast, identified with Iskurias, some seventy miles north-

ward of the Phasis, thirty interpreters were needed in Strabo's days to conduct the business of the place with the natives of the region. To-day it is estimated that about a score of distinct languages and over a hundred dialects are spoken in and about the Caucasus. In the streets of Tiflis six languages are constantly and three or four others occasionally in use; though here, as elsewhere, a mongrel Tartar tongue is employed as a *lingua franca*, understood by all the motley throng of the market-place.

It is no easy task to group these different races in any satisfactory way, so puzzling are the points of contrast and resemblance which they present in physical type, religion, language, and race. The most important division, however, is that which embraces the Georgian race, who may be said to be the only portion of the indigenous inhabitants of the Caucasus who have settled industrial habits, a history, or a literature. The native of Mingrelia is a kind of handsome "ne'er-do-well" and rather disreputable relation of the more civilized and energetic natives of Georgia proper, Imeritia, and Gouria. All these are Christians of a more or less—generally more—corrupt type; but other allied peoples—like the Lazes of the newly-acquired district near Batoum—are rabid Mussulmans, with an incurable taste for brigandage; while the Suanes, a rude tribe of mountaineers living on the slopes of Mount Elburz, whose curious little commonwealth has been fully described by Commander Telfer, have no religious beliefs at all beyond some superstitious practices, and a veneration for the memory of the famous Georgian queen of the twelfth century, Tamara.

The Tcherkess and the Lesghian were the guardians of the western and eastern Caucasus respectively before the coming of the encroaching Russ. The day of the Tcherkess—or the Circassian, as he is more generally called in Western Europe—is nearly past. The mountain home, which the tribes defended so long with ferocious bravery, is no longer theirs. Whole clans are extinct or scattered, shot down by Russian musketry, or deported to distant lands.

During their protracted struggles with the Russians, the sentiment of the West elevated these freedom-loving mountaineers to the rank of heroes. There is no doubt that they possess some of the savage virtues in remarkable strength—that they are courageous, hospitable, and passionately fond of liberty. It must be confessed, however, that the savage vices are to be found in even greater development than the virtues; and that, on the whole, the world would be no great loser if this survival of the Middle Ages were to become completely extinct. Essentially they are men of war, but, with all their bravery and the advantages of their country, they have never been able to offer a united front to the invader.

Only the sternest necessity will persuade the Tcherkess to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow; he leaves the females of his family to perform the vulgar labours of the house and the field, and is himself a hunter, and a brigand by profession. He lives, or lived—for the old ways of life have been terribly broken in upon—under an organization which is a singular compound of the feudal and the patriarchal system. There are chiefs, with their “fighting tail” of retainers, duinhe-

wassails, and serfs ; but the bulk of the nation are free-born, exercising despotic sway within their own families, and brooking control from none. Passionately revengeful, deceitful, and cruel, the Circassian is a remorseless foe and a fickle ally. His strongest attachment, perhaps, is reserved for his horse, and his gun ranks second in his affections. He carries other weapons of a more antique cast—a spear and bow and arrows—and his belt is quite an armoury of knives and daggers.

The dress of some of the tribes of the Caucasus bears a startling resemblance to that of the knights of mediæval times : to see a company of these horsemen riding gallantly along, clad in chain-mail and helmet, with a tunic over all, it is easy to imagine that they are a Crusading host resuming their march to Jerusalem after an enchanted sleep of seven centuries in these wild mountains. This is especially true of the Hessurs<sup>d</sup>—not, however, strictly a Tcherkess tribe—who have actually red crosses wrought upon their breasts, and declare that they are descendants of the Crusaders, though their worship now is given to the gods of war and the spirits of the earth, the oak, and the hills.

The Circassians are fanatical Mohammedans, though they are grossly ignorant of the faith they so ardently espouse, and their religion is mixed up with Christian and pagan beliefs and practices. The only branch of trade in which they have ever engaged with any seriousness is one which from time immemorial has been carried on—that of kidnapping or selling the female members of their own families to supply the demand in the slave-markets and harems of Turkey for the beauties of the Caucasus. It must be said that when

this and other traits in the Circassian character are kept in view, it is hard to get up any very strong sympathy over the ruinous misfortunes that befell them.

The Russians, tired of repressing their turbulent outbreaks, at length offered them the choice of removing from their mountain recesses to the valleys, where they could be placed under efficient Cossack control, or of emigrating from the country altogether. Thousands of them closed with the latter alternative, and the Sultan offered them an asylum among the faithful. It was not a successful experiment either for Turkey or the Circassians. There was terrible mortality among the refugees, from epidemics and other diseases, on the long overland march to the coast and in the sea-passage to the Turkish ports. They were scattered in small parties over the length and breadth of the Ottoman Empire; small communities of them are met with from the Dead Sea to the environs of Erzeroum, and from Erzeroum to the banks of the Danube—armed bands of needy and desperate men accustomed to live by plunder, among an unarmed peasantry often of alien faith. The consequence has been that the Circassians have had a red hand in most of the massacres in Bulgaria and Syria which have horrified Europe, and are one of the acute causes of the misery and misrule that reign throughout the Sultan's territories.

Much need not be said about the Abkhasians, a degenerate kind of Circassians living in the narrow strip of country between the ridge of the Caucasus and the Black Sea—the Tcherkesses proper, occupying for the most part the northern slope of the range—beyond the fact that an abortive rising took place among them



during the Russo-Turkish War. The tribes of Daghestan, however, and more particularly the Lesghians, who also inhabit a territory enclosed between the mountains and the sea, but on the northern side and at the Caspian end of the chain, have played a part in recent history that cannot be passed over so hastily.

This, and not Circassia, as is often supposed, is the country of Schamyl. Only for a few years, and in a loose kind of way, did the western tribes join those of the east in their resistance to the Russian power. Daghestan may be described as a triangle, the three sides of which are formed by the Caspian, the main range of the Caucasus, and a lofty spur which it throws off to the north-eastward, terminating at the "iron gates" of Derbend. The pass between the marshy seaboard and the mountain has always been the easiest and most frequented pathway between the north and the south of the Caucasus. The remains of ancient walls and towers, extending from Derbend along the crest of the hills, are believed to be the traces of fortifications built to keep at bay the roving hordes of the steppe; and it is thought probable that the narrow way, like the "Caucasian gates" at Dariel, was once closed by iron bars and gates. Russia's first advances towards the Caucasus were made in this direction; cautious approaches by the Czars Ivan and Feodor, followed more than a century later—in 1722—by a sudden spring of Peter the Great, who seized upon Derbend, where the little hut occupied by the autocrat will be shown to you on the outskirts of the strange-looking Eastern city whose white flat-topped houses, climbing stair-like up the steep slope from the water's edge, are in glaring con-

trast to the dark masses of the old khan's palace, the mosques, and the encircling walls and towers.

After a pause of more than half a century, Russian aggression again began ; but it was not till 1824 that the conquest of Daghestan and Tchetchnia was complete. There came a deceitful calm of a few years, and then a fierce outbreak of insurrection, that spread like a conflagration from one end of the Caucasus to the other, and for thirty years occupied the energies of the Russians in suppressing it.

The movement was as much a religious as a political one. Among so many disjointed nations there could scarcely be a real national movement ; while there was, on the other hand, the common bond of faith. Schamyl himself, with all his military talents, was more of a prophet-seer than a warrior : his adherents still couple his name with that of Mohammed in their prayers. Three forerunners of Schamyl — Mullah Mohammed, Ghazi-Mullah, and Hamzak Bek — preached the doctrines of "Mirdism," or strict obedience to the book of the moral law in the Koran, stirred up the fierce mountaineers to a pitch of religious and patriotic frenzy, and completely destroyed the authority of the khans whom the Russians had left in charge of the districts. Ghazi-Mullah was killed at the storming of the Avarian village of Ghoumri, Schamyl's birthplace, in 1832, and Hamzak Bek was assassinated ; and Schamyl, the son of a poor shepherd, and who had himself been in turn a pedler, a travelling fishmonger, a ballad-singer, and a juggler, took the leadership of the confederated tribes by sheer force of character and ability. Driven from Daghestan, Tchetchnia, on the northern slope of

the Andi spur of Caucasus, was made the centre of insurrection.

The fortress of Dargo became his headquarters, and from thence he reorganized the tribes on a democratic basis, imposed military service on all adult males, and stimulated the enthusiasm of his followers and kept together the jealous clans by miraculous messages from heaven, and the odour of extreme sanctity with which he surrounded himself. Through all this he had to fight desperately against the Russians, and often against the Tcherkess and other Caucasian tribes. In 1845 Dargo was captured; but Schamyl simply removed to the neighbouring fortress of Veden. While the Crimean War was raging, the Lesghian chief was left in peace; but on its conclusion, and the appointment of Prince Bariatinsky as Governor of the Caucasus, the Russians resumed, with greater determination than ever, the task of subjugating the independent tribes.

Narrower and narrower became the territory within which the brave Schamyl was able to hold his enemies at bay. Some of the tribes fell away from him, but others of his followers clung devotedly to their leader, and fought with splendid courage. He made his last desperate stand at Gounib, where he surrendered to Bariatinsky in August 1859, and the Caucasus at last was in the undisputed power of the Czar. Schamyl outlived for many years the conquest of his mountains and the humiliation of his religion. He was sent to St. Petersburg, where the late Emperor treated him with his usual kindness, and with the respect which his heroic deeds deserved, and appointed him and his family a residence at Kaluga. He died only recently at Mecca.

The Tchetchens, whom we have just seen in confederation with the Lesghians, are also zealous bandits and Sunni Mohammedans, but of different race from their Daghestani neighbours, belonging to a group to which infatuated ethnologists have given the impossible name of Mzhdzhedzhi—a word which most readers will probably regard as a sufficient specimen of their language, and perceive at the same time a measure of poetic justice in their subjugation by the Russian Prince Tzytzyanoff.

Some of the tribes occupying the Terek valleys—such as the Ingush—are almost pure heathens; while others, like the Kabardians and the Ossets, possess a faith in which paganism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity are jumbled together. The Tartar tribes—Kumuks, Turkmen, and the like, simple wandering people, half-highwaymen, half-shepherds, and carriers—and, to the south of the mountains, Armenians, Persians, Kurds, and Jews, with what Professor Bryce calls a “top-dressing” of Russians (military people and colonies of schismatics generally), and pushing traders and merchants from other European countries, complete the strange hotch-potch of nations inhabiting the Caucasus and Transcaucasia.

These are best studied, perhaps, in the streets of Tiflis; but to reach Tiflis we must thread our way for one hundred and twenty miles through the devious pass of Dariel, the *Porta Caucasia* of the ancients. A fine, military road has been constructed, at a cost of four million sterling, through this defile, which is the only regular passage of the Caucasus throughout the whole length of the chain, the Mannisson Pass to the westward not being available for wheeled vehicles.

The entrance to the pass is at the railway terminus Vladikavkas—the “key of the Caucasus,” built by Potemkin to control this whole region; and after a glimpse of the mountains, with their line of far-receding snowy peaks, the traveller plunges into the black jaws of the ravine of the Terek, and pursues his way, mile after mile, at the foot or along the flanks of tremendous precipices. Professor Bryce, in his brilliant account of his travels in this region, says: “Clothed, wherever there is room for a root to hold, with the richest deciduous woods, the limestone mountains rise in wonderful precipices five or six thousand feet above the valley, ledge over ledge, and crag over crag; while at the bottom they press the river so close that at some points the road has been cut out in the overhanging cliff face, and the streamlets from above break in spray over it.”

This is only the beginning of the defile; grander and more savage scenes lie beyond. At Lars and other points Russian forts, occupying the sites of Georgian or Persian castles, command the pass; and now and then a miserable Osset hut or two are seen, but there is no other sign of life. “Sixteen miles from Vladikavkas,” says Mr. Bryce, “the valley seems suddenly to come to an end, and the track to vanish among the tremendous crags out of which the river descends in a succession of cataracts. The road crosses to its eastern bank, and mounts rapidly along a shelf cut out of the mountain. At the bottom of the gorge there is a furious torrent; on each side, walls of granite, rising vertically, one would think, four thousand feet above it. Behind are still loftier pinnacles, broken, jagged, and terrible, their topmost summits flecked with snow, not a bush, flower, or blade of

green to relieve their bare sternness." A turn of the defile brings us in view of the black precipice and glorious snowy crest of Kazbek, rising to a height of about sixteen thousand feet above sea-level, and forming, with another stupendous mountain over against it, the "pillars" of the "Caucasian gates."

It seems probable enough that in early times an iron gateway was built here to keep out the northern barbarian from the Persian, Macedonian, or Roman Empire. It marked the farthest flight of the Roman eagles in this direction, for Pompey's conquests in Georgia stopped short at the wall of the Caucasus. The only dangers now to be feared are from landslips or from avalanches of snow falling on the track in the winter time, such as in 1855 overwhelmed part of the troop of General Bartolomei, who, in charge of a convoy of prisoners, was traversing the "Valley of the Devil"—an appropriately named gorge reached when, leaving the Dariel proper behind, and passing the watershed at a height of eight thousand feet, the road begins to descend the Aragwa River, under the shadow of the Cross Mountain, towards the lowlands of Georgia. These gorges of the Aragwa have been described as resembling Killiecrankie, "only on a far vaster scale."

By-and-by, where the Aragwa joins the Kur, we come upon another atrocious example of Caucasian nomenclature—the village of Mtzkhet, which, if we are to accept the tradition that it was founded by the great-grandson of Japheth, gives one an alarming idea of the primal language spoken before the Tower of Babel was built. A miserable place enough now, it was famous in its day as the capital of Georgia, and a number of the Georgian

kings and queens are buried in its fortified church. Here much of the early troubled history of Georgia "transacted itself." Three centuries before Christ, Pharnavaz, governor of the town, founded the Georgian kingdom, compiled the Georgian alphabet—with the aid, doubtless, of hints from his Armenian neighbours—and laid the beginning of the Georgian literature; and about the year 325 A.D. Christianity was introduced hither by the female saint Nina.

Even the circumstance that Japheth's great-grandson had chosen its site could not preserve the supremacy of this town with the unpronounceable name, and fourteen centuries ago the capital was removed to Tiflis. Georgia continued to stagger forward on its appointed career, occasionally raised to a high pitch of fame, but generally in very bad case. Thus Bagrat III. was a great conqueror and encourager of learning in the tenth century; David II., a century later, restored the glory of the kingdom, which had paled through the devastations of the Seljukian Turks; and the splendid era of Queen Tamara (1184–1212) is the Golden Age of Georgia, alike in literature and in feats of arms. The ancient churches whose remains are scattered over Transcaucasia are mostly attributed by legend to the pious zeal of this royal lady, as the ruined castles, resembling Scottish Border keeps, which are found in all directions crowning the rocks of this mountainous land, are supposed to have been built by the national hero, "Black Oghlu."

But what with the ravages of Mongols, Turks, and Persians, and internal divisions, Georgia gradually sank to a deplorable state; Georgian literature and Christianity, especially, were placed, as it were, "between the devil

and the deep sea," by having the wild mountain banditti on one side, and invading Moslem hosts on the other.

The Empress Catherine extended the protection of Russia over the rickety state, which had been divided and subdivided until it had nearly thirty princes exercising independent rule. The venerable King Heraclius fled before a new Persian invasion, led by Aga Mohammed, the first of the reigning dynasty of the Shahs; and the country falling into complete anarchy, Russia stepped across the Caucasus, made pensioners of the pretenders to the throne of the Bagratides (who, being able to trace their descent back to King Solomon, and, of course, to Adam, were the oldest royal family in the world), and found herself, in the first year of the present century, face to face in Asia with Persia and Turkey.

Since then, repeated wars with Sultan and Shah have had one constant result—the extension southward of the Czar's dominions. By 1810, Imeritia, Mingrelia, and Gouria had been annexed; and the campaigns of Ermolof and Paskievitch in 1826–28 ended in the Treaty of Turkmanchai, by which the Persian provinces of Erivan and Nakhchevan were ceded to the Emperor Nicolas, who thus became master of Etchmiadzin, the ecclesiastical capital of Armenia, and carried forward his frontier to the Araxes and Mount Ararat. Lastly, by the late war another slice of Armenia, with the strong town of Kars, twice captured and twice surrendered by Russia, and the seaport of Batoum, were added to the ever-growing empire of the Czars.

Tiflis has had its share in the misfortunes of Georgia, as well as the older capital, and has been at least eight times destroyed by invaders. Instead of being



a miserable village, however, it is a city of about ninety thousand souls; probably it is more rich and more populous to-day than at any time since King Vakh-tang founded it, in the fifth century. It lies in a hollow among bare and dusty hills; and the rapid, muddy current of the Kur, now crossed by three handsome bridges, flows under its walls, separating it from a suburb on the south bank which is chiefly inhabited by an industrious German colony of market-gardeners and artisans, the descendants of emigrants who fled hither from Swabia many years ago, rather than accept a new hymn-book.

Tiflis proper—the suggestion of orthographical purists to spell the name Tbylysys (“the hot”) will be rejected with contumely—contains at least two distinct “towns.” There is the Russian quarter, with broad, regular, and dusty streets, and many handsome houses, and with public gardens and theatres and other appurtenances of the civilization of the West. On a high site is the citadel, with the prison, the ancient Georgian cathedral, and near by the barracks of the Russian garrison. Facing the principal street is the palace of the Lieutenant of the Caucasus—perhaps the most onerous military command in the empire. Here, of course, are wont to assemble the rank and beauty of Transcaucasia. Georgia is notably well supplied both with beauty and with rank. The country literally swarms with “nobles,” some of them ragged and needy enough, and ready—and no shame to them—to do the humblest labour for a small fee; others handsome and dashing-looking fellows, and highly ornamental figures in the public promenades or the

dancing assemblies, where the national dance—the *lesghynski*—is still indulged in with ardour. It is whispered, however, that the exterior of the Georgian is the best of him; that there are very few solid qualities—often little else than a consuming thirst for his native wines—to be found under his gold brocaded frock-coat and jewelled belt; and the national history seems to bear out the reproach. Something almost as ungallant has been said of the Georgian dames, whose charms have been so loudly extolled. “A Turk may think them perfection,” says Mr. Bryce; “but it may be doubted whether any one who has seen the ladies of Cork and Baltimore would take pleasure in their society.” Many of them are admirable pieces of Nature’s handiwork, so far as mere colour and form are concerned; but features, however regular, that are entirely wanting in expression, soon become insipid.

The native town is a complete contrast to the European quarter. The narrow, dirty, and crooked streets of one-story houses are blocked by strings of camels and donkeys, loaded with fruit, and bullock-carts full of huge skins of Khaketian wine. In the crowds that throng these lanes are seen the most puzzling varieties of feature and dress, and the ear is confounded with a jargon of unknown tongues. Each leading trade has its allotted street and its covered bazaar. There are thoroughfares set apart for the cooking-shops and the wine-seller, for the dealers in leather, in jewellery, in carpets, and in furs; for the blacksmiths, and silver-smiths, and armourers, and musical instrument makers; for the tea-dealers, and sandal-makers, and fabricators of turbans, of *papacks*, of Bokharan lambskin, of the

tall sugar-loaf hats affected by the Persians, and of all the other varieties of head-dress worn near the Caucasus. "The ground-floor of the house," again to quote Professor Bryce, "is open to the street, from which it is generally raised a step or two: here the dealer squats on a piece of matting, surrounded by his assistants, with his wares hung or stowed round the walls behind, and in the room which is visible at the back. If he practises a handicraft, he works at it here in the sight of all men." Many beautiful native fabrics are exposed in the Tiflis bazaars—most noteworthy, perhaps, being the rugs and carpets of quaint and wonderful patterns from Persia, Kurdistan, and Shirvan; but what chiefly makes them worthy of a visit are their frequenters, the representatives of a score of different races and religions—Russian and German, Armenian and Persian and Georgian, Kurd, Tartar, Circassian, and Kabardan—that mingle here, as throughout this party-coloured region, with scarcely a sign of blending.

On a high ridge overlooking Tiflis are the picturesque ruins of the old Persian fortress, behind which are the wooded lower spurs of the Caucasus, while in clear weather the snows of Kazbek are temptingly visible to the dwellers in the hot valley of the Kur. In summer the denizens of the fashionable world of Tiflis escape from the stifling atmosphere of the city, and take refuge at Kajori and other charming health-resorts in the neighbouring mountains. There are, apart from the old capital and its tombs, numerous spots within reach of the town where the members of the Archæological Congress that met last autumn at Tiflis were able to glean a rich harvest of antiquarian lore. Thus

Gori and its old castle, perched like an eagle's eyrie on a crag, and the wonderful rock-hewn chambers and columned halls of Uphlos Tzikhé, the "Petra of the Caucasus," might invite a visit. Or excursions might be made eastward over the bare, brown, solemn steppes, by way of Elizavetpol to the Caspian port of Lenkoran, where, in the latitude of Lisbon, the winter temperature, chilled by the parching icy winds from Siberia, is no higher than that of Reykjavik in Iceland, and the sea is often blocked with ice. Much more attractive will be found the leafy and richly-watered country westward of Tiflis, beyond the pass of Souram, where the only railway in Transcaucasia ascends the ridge that separates the basins of the Kur and the Rion by one of the steepest gradients in the world. The latter river, from its head-streams in the district of the Suans, under the double peak of Elburz, to its mouth at Poti, runs uninterruptedly through scenes of natural beauty and historic note; and farther south, in Gouria and in the mountains of Lazistan, are innumerable objects of interest. Again, we might follow the fine military roads that conduct to what were formerly the frontier fortresses of Akhalzik and Alexandropol, and that converge on a "place of arms" famous in military annals—Kars—which, after much bloody fighting, has at length been wrested from the Turk. But, as Mr. Bryce's travelling companions urged, when, on his way to Tiflis, he proposed to halt and examine the antiquities of Mtzkhet, "Let us get to our journey's end; the world is a big world, and you cannot see everything in it."

One short trip, however, we must make before leaving this part of the Czar's domains. It leads us

from Tiflis through the orchards and fields of German, Molikani, and Mordvin colonists; across a steppe where groups of low, round earthen hovels suggest the dwelling-places of moles rather than of mankind—even Tartar mankind; then up a river valley between ridges of stern, red-hued mountains, where in actual travel the tourist still runs an unpleasant risk of being stopped by brigands, till we reach the Goktcha lake, a lonely basin of fresh water, fifty miles in length, lying at a height of nearly six thousand feet above sea-level, and surrounded by lofty and barren hills patched with snow. On the only island of the lake is an old and famed Armenian monastery; and dominating the scene is the enormous bulk and triple peaks of Ala-gos, thirteen thousand four hundred and thirty-six feet above the sea. But sites more ancient than Sevan and summits surpassing Ala-gos lie ahead; for following down the stream that flows from Goktcha to the Aras, we come in sight of the minarets and gardens of Erivan, and over against us the majestic forms of Great and Little Ararat. Here, indeed, we are in a locality with associations which carry us back to the beginnings of history, and with magnificent natural attractions that show no signs of decay. Farther down the fertile valley of the Aras is Nakhchevan, which boasts itself the oldest city in the world; for there Noah, as the name of the town signifies, made his "first descent" on dry land. Erivan, a delightfully characteristic Eastern town, as yet little spoiled by Russian varnish, and possessing, in its mosques and ancient sirdar's palace, beautiful specimens of Persian art in mosaics of glazed and coloured tiles, claims to have been the residence of Noah before the Deluge. Etch-

miadzin, near at hand, is the cradle of the Gregorian Church, and its renowned monastery, the seat of the Patriarch, is a spot of surpassing interest to the keen-witted and enterprising Armenian race, who, though still divided between Turkish and Russian masters, cherish warmly the hope of restoring their old national independence.

But our last look must be reserved for the twin mountains that, rising from a common base, overlook this region of marvel, and are themselves the greatest marvel of all; for the elegant cone of Little Ararat, whose clear-cut pyramid rises ten thousand feet above the plain, and nearly thirteen thousand feet above the sea; and the bulkier and loftier brother-peak of Great Ararat, whose black precipices, crowned with perpetual snows, rise to a height of over seventeen thousand feet. They mark the utmost confine of the Czar's possessions in this direction, and the point of junction of Russian, Turkish, and Persian territory—a magnificent cornerstone for three empires!

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### RUSSIA IN ASIA.



N loosely following, in this survey of the dominions of the Czar, the process by which, from small beginnings, the Russian Empire has steadily grown all around its vast circumference like an enormous snowball, we have already been carried at different points across the "stony girdle" of mountains that divide Europe from Asia. It is now necessary to step boldly across the barrier of the Urals, look around, and examine what may be the extent, the aspect, and the value, present and prospective, of those possessions of Russia in Northern and Central Asia regarding which there prevail such strange, confused, and alarming impressions.

There are few names of such magic virtue as Siberia. The mere mention of it seems to chill the air on the warmest summer day. It has compressed within it all the associations of immensity of space and intensity of cold—the utmost poverty of nature and the deepest misery of man. The picture that it calls up in most minds is a waste, white plain, brooded over by fogs, or with Arctic gales ruffling its snows; bounded by black masses of pine forests, with snow lying heavy on their



frigid branches ; here and there great mile-broad rivers rolling slowly from under the shadow of the woods northwards into regions ever drearier and more empty, where at length the dwarf willow and birch cease to grow, and the soil is frozen all the year round to a depth of two hundred or three hundred feet below the surface, until the solitary waters find a fit resting-place among the icebergs of the Polar Sea.

Between post-station and post-station, even on what may be called the frequented routes of travel, hundreds of versts, it is thought, may be passed over without a human habitation being seen ; at the most, the rough log-huts of trappers and fishermen on the edge of the forest or the stream, the "yurtas" or tents of birch-bark or reindeer-skin belonging to some wandering tribe of savages, cowering in some hollow, or the mournful train of convicts and political refugees, with their Cossack guard, making their long last journey to the mines or fortresses of Eastern Siberia, are the only signs of the presence of man.

These sights are actually to be seen in Siberia, they are even characteristic and peculiar to it, and they have naturally influenced most powerfully the imaginations of those who have written and read about the country. Siberia truly is a terribly "winter-ridden" land. The frost comes early, bites fiercely, and lingers long. There is scarcely a locality where the thermometer does not fall many degrees below zero in winter, and there are some where snow covers the ground at midsummer. It is true also that the general features of the scenery—its boundless plains and forests and its mighty streams—though impressive in their magnitude, are sad and

sombre in colouring, and are repeated with wearisome monotony; also, that the country is most sparsely populated, even compared with Russia proper, seeing that there is barely a human inhabitant for each square mile of territory.

But, let it be remembered, Siberia is more a continent than a single country, in point of the extent of the earth's surface that it covers; that, excluding from view the Central Asian possessions of Russia, it far exceeds in area Australia, the United States, or Europe; and that, including Turkestan and the Steppes, Asiatic Russia contains six million square miles of territory—larger than the whole of South America. There is plenty of room within its frontiers for its desert spaces, and also for fertile and fruitful countries admirably suited for colonization. Cutting away the rough selvage of *tundra* lands, stony mountains, and sandy steppe that form its borders north, east, south, and west, there remain vast plains and river valleys, covered with fine, deep, rich loam, stretching across nearly the whole breadth of the Asian continent, and capable of supporting a dense and thriving agricultural population. One of the latest and most keen-eyed of the travellers who have visited Siberia—Professor Nordenskiöld—says that a belt of this rich agricultural land, six hundred miles in breadth, extends from the Ural chain to the neighbourhood of the Sea of Okotsk.

These magnificent, stone-free plains are still undeveloped. On the upper waters of the Obi and Irtysh and their tributaries, much of the land has been taken up, and heavy crops of grain are raised. In the still richer Yenisei valley there is a thin sprinkling of

settlers, who have recently found a new outlet for their produce by that great river; but to the eastward from Krasnojarsk stretch nearly uninhabited plains, covered with the deep *tcherno-sem*, the famous "black earth" of Middle Russia—"equal," says Nordenskiöld, "without doubt, in fertility, to the best parts of Scania, and in extent surpassing the whole Scandinavian peninsula."

Another authority, M. de Lesseps, who has cast a prospector's eye over Siberia, has declared that it is the richest country in the whole world, in respect alike of the produce of the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms. As yet, however, it is only a Land of Promise—the "great North-East" of Russia, capable of exercising the surplus energies and absorbing the surplus population of the Slav race, as the United States and the Canadian Dominion have done for the Anglo-Saxon peoples.

The comparative slowness and want of success of Siberian colonization are to be attributed partly to the ignorance, and perhaps also to the inferior intelligence and enterprise, of the Russian peasant; but they are due also to social and political causes, that, though still potent, must in time have an end, and leave the country to the free development of its splendid resources.

Chief among the obstacles referred to is the notorious fact that for a couple of centuries Siberia has been the penal settlement of Russia. It has been populated much as Australia was in the earlier days—first by needy and unscrupulous adventurers, seeking freedom from the control of the law; then by eager fur-hunters and gold-seekers, desperately searching for short cuts to wealth, which was generally spent as rapidly as it was won;

and by refractory serfs, deported thither by the government, or by the nobles, who had, under the old law, the power of transporting as well as of whipping their unlucky vassals.

With these began to flow a constantly growing stream of convicts—criminals guilty of the blackest crimes, and political prisoners, often men and women of the highest rank and culture, and suspected merely of disaffection towards a despotic government. Prisoners of war, and rebels found in arms against the Czar, were added to the throng—from the Swedish soldiers taken in the wars with Charles the Twelfth, who established the first Siberian school at Tobolsk, and built several of the churches at Irkutsk, down to the patriots captured during the last Polish insurrection. Schismatics and religious visionaries of the most extreme type, and Nihilists and Socialists of equally violent political views, have been stowed away in this vast receptacle for the vagabondage, the crime, and the bold and lofty aspirations of Russia. All degrees of guilt have been confounded together, with the innocent and the unfortunate. It is not strange that there should be a confusion of the moral perceptions in the popular mind, and that the malefactor and the patriot should alike be objects of pity and sympathy. It is also natural that in the eyes of the expatriated the place of their enforced exile should have no charms, that they would exaggerate its discomforts and hardships and underrate its amenities; and that to their friends and relatives in Europe, from whom they were hopelessly parted, Siberia should be the most stern and forbidding of wildernesses, and the “mines” the scenes of more than inquisitorial torture.

The Russian Government, in short, have done all in their power to give to what is perhaps their most precious possession the worst possible name.

Whatever may have been the case in former times, however, there is now good reason to believe that the condition of the "exile in Siberia" is not so forlorn and pitiable as we are apt to suppose. He is no longer dead to the outer world from which he is separated by a thousand leagues of forest and marsh; on the contrary, if he chooses he may be an active and useful member of the community. The brutal whippings and tortures that formed part of the punishment in the days of Catherine and Paul have gradually been abolished in later reigns, though a murderous weapon—the *plète*—is used in exceptional cases at the penal colony on Saghalien and other prisons of Eastern Siberia, where the most desperate class of prisoners are confined.

The Rev. Mr. Lansdell, who visited all the more important Siberian penal settlements, has shown that the regimen and discipline are far from severe; that the prisons are clean, airy, and well managed, and the general method of treatment at least as humane as in Western countries. Only the worst class of criminals are confined within walls. Even murderers, who, owing to the abolition of capital punishment, form a large proportion of the prisoners, have a license given to them which seems hardly consistent with public tranquillity. Approaching after nightfall the penal settlement of Kara, near Nertchinsk, Mr. Lansdell passed through droves of labouring men returning from work, and was disagreeably impressed on being told by the commandant that these were convicts who were permitted to live in

their own houses, and that there were eight hundred murderers about the place.

In the milder class of offences the convicts, after a short probation, are allowed a pretty full exercise of their liberty—to acquire property, and to settle down if they choose as prosperous traders or husbandmen; a watch, which is not always effective, being kept over their movements to prevent their slipping back into Europe.

The regulations are still more lenient, as a rule, in the case of political prisoners. Siberian society is not censorious; it does not inquire too curiously into the antecedents of the new members that come to join it, nor draw fine distinctions between mere political faults and moral wrong-doing. The free settlers, of course, largely predominate; but the convict element, either in the shape of those actually transported or of their descendants, permeates the population too generally for strict ideas of caste to prevail. Consequently the society of a Siberian town of any consequence is apt to be strangely mixed. The most refined taste and culture and the grossest depravity are found side by side; scions of the oldest families in Russia are thrown into association with *parvenus* of yesterday; mysterious conspirators and exalted enthusiasts are mingled with vulgar swindlers and scamps.

All this gives a romantic and peculiar tone to town life in cities like Omsk, Krasnojarsk, or Irkutsk; and the opportunity of beginning afresh in a new field has turned many a worthless or dangerous member of Russian society into a useful citizen of Siberia. But the country has need of a less doubtful class of settlers

than those which the government have bestowed on it ; and the whole penal system, like many things else in Siberia, stands thoroughly in need of reform, if not of abolition. Untold misery and flagrant injustice are still inflicted, even under the milder regulations of modern times, especially on the class of exiles who are banished to the desolate wildernesses of Eastern Siberia. And it will be a great day for Russia when she begins in earnest to turn to account that magnificent colonial empire which has too long been used as the prison-house of her refractory children.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE DISCOVERY AND CONQUEST OF SIBERIA.

**B**Y whose hands, by what process, and at what time did this vast and splendid possession fall into the hands of the Czars? The story has never been told in accurate detail—perhaps never will. The names of the great discoverers, conquerors, and colonizers of the continents of America, Africa, and Australia are in every one's memory. Their good and their evil fame are alike imperishable: their audacious marchings and fightings, their temptations and failures and triumphs, their far-reaching plans and their mighty achievements, are they not written in the books of the chronicles of the discovery and conquest? But who can run over in his mind the list of outstanding names in the adventurous band that, in the course of less than a century, overran Siberia from the Ural Mountains to the Pacific Ocean, and set the stamp of Russian domination indelibly on Asia? The tale of the discovery and exploration of the Amazon, the Nile, and the Mississippi has often been told; but who can mention offhand the man who first lighted upon the rivals of these famous streams in Northern Asia—the Obi, the Yenisei, the Lena, and the Amoor? We know all about the



exploits of Columbus and Magellan, Cortez and Pizarro; but who is familiar with the career, or has even heard of the existence of Irmilof and Deshnef, Staduchin and Kupilof?

The records of their deeds, where any record is still extant, are for the most part mouldering in obscure recesses of the government bureaux at St. Petersburg and Moscow, or in the "chanceries" of Irkutsk and Tobolsk, tied up tightly in red tape, and covered with dust and cobwebs, which it would be sacrilege for the unofficial fingers to disturb. Some of these archives have been rummaged, and from the "unimaginable dust-heap" interesting facts have been fished up and classified; but much more remains to be done, and at the best, the narrative of Siberian discovery, like the "story of Cambuscan bold," will probably remain to the end of time half told.

The Russian conquistadors were inspired by the same spirit of bold and restless adventure that animated their brethren in the New World. But they were rude and unlettered peasants; their leaders were not skilled diplomatists, warriors, and writers constantly in communication with the most enlightened courts of their time, and with professional historians and learned ecclesiastics in their train. They had not time or taste, even if they had had the skill, for the making of books; and literary talent would have been quite unappreciated in the Russian court of the time. Their government took no interest in the manner in which the new conquests were achieved, being content to accept the fruits of them without troublesome inquiry; and all the world outside Russia was ignorant or careless of what was going on.

The eyes of the nations were turned in another direction, where more brilliant and attractive prospects were being opened up. By contrast with the richness, warmth, and variety of the productions of the East and West Indies and America, the snows and pine-forests of Siberia must have seemed singularly forbidding. Here were no pagan empires, crumbling with age and burdened with wealth, waiting to be seized by the first bold intruder; or treasure-chambers filled with silver and gold, ready to open at the touch of the Christian spear. Out of the wreck of the Kipchak empire only one principality retained any cohesiveness—the Khanate of Turan, on the Tobol and Irtysh; all to the eastward seems at the time to have been almost uninhabited. The sole attraction was the furs of the wild animals, and the *yassak* or tribute that could be wrung from the wretched wandering nomads. The discovery of a new river, lake, or mountain system seemed to these rough Cossack pioneers hardly an occasion for reporting to the remote central authority, who paid so little regard to their doings.

It was only, therefore, when some dispute arose among them about the right to trapping or fishing ground, or when some specially strong opposition was offered to the little band by a combination of native tribes, that it was thought worth while to let their "Father" at Moscow know what was happening. So, for example, it came about—that is, from petitions and memorials sent home by rival claimants to a *korga* or sand-bank at the mouth of the Anadir River, "the resting-place of multitudes of sea-horses"—that we learn of the discovery of that great stream in 1649, by Michael Staduchin, who led a party across the mountains from the river Kolima; and

of the still more remarkable voyage of Simon Deshnef, who set sail upon the Icy Sea from the Kolima, in three tiny vessels, and, as his memorial tells, "after having been forced back by the ice, and driven about by furious tempests in this strange ocean, and after great danger, misfortunes, and with the loss of part of his shipping, arrived at last at the mouth of the Anadir," thus doubling for the first time the eastern extremity of Asia, and proving the complete severance of that continent from America.

It has already been told how, when the Grand Dukes of Muscovy were under the yoke of the Great Khan, more than one of them, sorely against their will, made the dreadful journey across the Siberian Steppes to the Chinese frontier, to do fealty to their Mongol lord. Similar journeys were made, by a more southerly route, by monks and merchants from the West, the most notable being the Polos of Venice, during the Middle Ages; and something was thus known of the magnificence of the court of Cathay under the descendants of Genghiz, of the deserts and lofty mountains by which it was separated from Europe, and of the communities of Nestorian Christians that were to be met with on the way.

But when the Mongol Empire broke up, a thick darkness again fell on these regions. The Ural Mountains were like an impenetrable curtain drawn between them and the European countries, down till almost exactly a hundred years ago. Before that time there had been some little intercourse between the Novgorodian conquerors of Perm and their wild neighbours; and in 1499 a Russian expedition was led across the moun-

tains against the Voghuls and the Ostiaks living on the lower Obi, and returned with a rich spoil of furs and tribute, thus leading the Grand Dukes soon after to adopt, as one of their designations, "Lord of Obdoria," a title still held by their successors the Czars. Then the enterprising merchant who founded the family of the Stroganofs began to exchange the Russian wares, and the salt from the mines he had opened near the sources of the Kama, for the furs brought in by the "savages" on the other side of the mountains. By-and-by it was noted and bruited abroad, according to Vsevolosky, that these peltries were infinitely superior in quality to those ordinarily brought to market; and the "Leather-stockings" of the Volga began to make longer and longer excursions into the forests in search of this hidden source of wealth, and military bands followed them as far as the Irtish to collect tribute. \*

The conquest of Siberia, however, really dates from the year 1580. Like other great events in history, accident rather than design brought it about. About this time the depredations of the Cossacks of the Don were carried on upon a scale of unexampled magnitude. Not only did the robber horsemen scour the land in search of plunder; they seized the command of the rivers and fitted out piratical expeditions on the Volga and Caspian, and held the command of South-Eastern Russia. The Czar Ivan the Terrible sent a strong body of troops, who descended the Volga, beat and dispersed the river-pirates, and killed or captured their chiefs.

One leader, however, Yermak Timotheivitch,—a fugitive from justice, like many of his rough companions,—finding his retreat to the Don cut off, continued to as-

ceed the Volga with six thousand followers; then striking up through the valley of the Kama, he found shelter, near its head-waters, with the family of the Stroganofs. Here Yermak's brain was set on fire by the strange tales he heard of the marvellous richness of the unknown land on whose frontier he had now arrived. He formed a sudden resolution, and gathering together the remains of his way-worn band, he marched boldly across the border. In those days the lands on the courses of the great rivers Irtysh, Tobol, and Tura, and as far as the main stream of the Obi itself, formed the Tartar Khanate of Turan, the ruler of which was Kutchum Khan, a descendant of the conqueror Genghiz. His capital was Isker, a fortified town on the right bank of the Irtysh, not far from the site of the modern Tobolsk; and the neighbouring people were known as the "Sibir," a name that has been extended to include the whole of Northern Asia. Terrible were the toils and the sufferings of the Cossack adventurers in passing the mountains, fording the streams, threading the forest labyrinths, and fighting the enemy. They were invariably successful; but when at last the banks of the Irtysh were reached, Yermak's band had dwindled from six thousand to five hundred. Nevertheless, he boldly gave battle to the Khan, and in the month of October 1581 completely defeated him and entered his capital in triumph.

Yermak was prudent as well as valiant. He knew that he could not hold this new possession with his own hand, and he determined to make his peace with the Czar. He sent a deputation to Moscow, bearing a present of priceless furs and a selection of captives of the different races that had been subdued, and with an offer of the

conquered territory to the ruler of Russia. Ivan was not a prince to look narrowly for flaws in the title, when a new country and a fresh instalment of retribution on the Tartar were proffered him. He accepted the charge with joy; and Yermak the refugee became by letters patent Yermak, Prince of Siberia. His government was not a bed of roses. His men mutinied, and the Tartars rose in insurrection. Within three years he was drowned in attempting to swim the Irtysh, being dragged to the bottom by the weight of a suit of armour which the Czar had graciously bestowed on him in acknowledgment of the gift of Siberia to Russia.

At first the progress of the Russians in their Asian dominions was slow, and marked with frequent disasters. But gradually they made good their hold in the Obi region, and then the process of the agglutination of new territory went on with amazing rapidity. Tiumen, on the Tura, half-way between Ekaterinburg and Tobolsk, was the first town built by the Russians in Siberia. Its site had been occupied as a Tartar hold dating back to the time of Genghiz: it is now noted for its tanneries and soap-boiling establishments. In the following year, 1587, the foundations of an *ostrog* were laid at the junction of the Tobol and the Irtysh, a spot now occupied by Tobolsk, the capital of the extensive government of Western Siberia. Within the next fifteen years a foothold was obtained on the upper course of the Obi, and Tomsk was established in 1604, and became in turn the chief town of an immense province, embracing the rich mining regions of Barnaul and the Altai, the greater part of the fertile corn-growing Baraba Steppe, and districts where the climate is so

warm and mild that great crops of excellent grapes are grown.

The next step brought the invaders to the magnificent river Yenisei. What particular Cossack captain first led his band to its waters is not exactly known. The first we hear of is Feodor Dyakof, who was sent from Tobolsk to collect *yassak* from the tribes in 1598. In 1618 a party of Cossacks began driving piles for a new fort at Yeniseisk, on the banks of the stream; and in 1628, Krasnojarsk, the capital of the Yeniseisk province, and one of the handsomest and most attractively situated towns in Siberia, was built as a defence against the Kirghiz incursions. By-and-by the Kirghiz became tired of the incessant fighting, and moved southward into the wide steppes about the head-waters of the Irtysh and the Ishim, thus removing a great obstacle to Russian advance to the east.

Meanwhile, equally rapid progress was being made in the north. Berezov, on the lower Obi—afterwards the place of exile of the famous Menchikof, and of other ambitious and unfortunate courtiers—became at an early date an *entrepôt* where the Ostiaks and Samoyedes assembled to pay their tribute, and exchange their furs for Russian manufactures. On the Tas river, which, as a map will show, falls into a deep bay in the Gulf of Obi, there was fixed in 1600, for a like purpose, a wintering station called Mangaseia, a Russian corruption of “magazine;” and a few years later this was removed eastward, to a new Mangaseia, or Turukhansk, at the union of the Lower Tunguska with the Yenisei. Here, by-and-by, rose a cathedral-church and a monastery, which became renowned and rich, and a great centre

for the spread of Christianity among the native races. At the time of Nordenskiöld's visit it was tenanted by a single monk, and contained as its choicest possession a picture of the Emperor Paul in powdered hair and military uniform, which the superstitious *Shoptsi*, who have been driven by Orthodox persecution into these cold wastes on the Arctic Circle, worship as a likeness of their holy prophet, the murdered Czar Peter III.

The mouth of the Yenisei was first reached in 1610, and without delay a party of fur-hunters from Mangaseia fitted out an expedition for discovery and trade, which embarked in their *kotschi*, or flat-bottomed, decked boats on the "Cold Sea," and explored the Siberian shores as far as the Piasina River. From the same centre, also, the Tunguska was ascended and the important discovery made of the Lena, the third in rank of the Siberian streams, and the first permanent settlement was founded on its banks in 1631. Five years afterwards the Cossack Busa, setting out from Yeniseisk in search, as usual, of peltry and *yassak*, made his way to the Lena, and after adding forty fur-hunters to his band at Olekminsk, descended the river to its mouth in the Polar Ocean; and in 1638 he lighted upon the Iana, simultaneously with the discovery of a still larger stream, the Indigirka, by Ivanof, surnamed the "Observer of Fasts." Next year Kupilof crossed the Aldan Mountains and sighted the Pacific waters in the Sea of Okotsk, and heard at the same time of a great river called the Amoor; and within the next decade Yakutsk had been founded; the Russians, led by Michael Staduchin, had planted themselves firmly on the Kolima, the last of the great rivers flowing into the



Polar Sea; and, as we have seen, had in their frail craft actually sailed round the extreme eastern cape of Asia and landed on the shores of Kamschatka.

Thus within seventy years from the time when they crossed the threshold of Asia, the Russians had carried their discoveries and conquests to within sight of the shores of America. Nowhere in history has the process of subjugation been more rapid and continuous. The invaders "came, saw, and conquered." The natives of the country tried to resist them; but they were scattered and weak, and for the most part soon reconciled themselves to their Russian masters. The serious difficulties that the little Cossack bands had to encounter arose from the enormous distances that had to be traversed, and the danger of being lost in the icy deserts and trackless forests, where often no food could be procured for many days' march; or of suffering shipwreck in their frail little vessels. Government in Moscow left them pretty much to their own devices, and seldom accurately knew how far the Russian dominions extended. Private adventurers—*Promyschleni*, as they were called—started on enterprises for plunder or for trade; and, if they happened to be fortunate, proved often the *avant couriers* of the Cossack militia. These *Promyschleni*, according to Burney, were "hunters and adventurers who made excursions for profit by the chase, by traffic, or by whatever accident might throw in their way, whether they went with or without authority from, or the knowledge of, their government, and who, when they came among a strange people and found their strength adequate to making the demand, failed not to require of them to acknowledge them-

selves subjects of the Russian Empire, and to pay tribute."

Generally the two classes acted amicably together, and formed a kind of "thieves' league," for the spoiling of the heathen in the cause of the Czar and the holy religion. They made no boast of their exploits. A trip to the Arctic Circle in a comfortable yacht is now thought sufficient occasion for the production of a thick volume. Busa, Kupilof, or Staduchin never thought of writing a thrilling narrative of their marvellous experiences and splendid discoveries. There was no public to write for—no Geographical Societies to award them honours; it is very doubtful if these sturdy pioneers had even the gift of penmanship. Their stories would hardly bear the light of day. Like the contemporary Spanish adventurers, they were deeply religious men after their lights. Seldom did they escape from a danger, or touch on a new shore, that they did not erect a cross as a memorial. The "Observer of Fasts" was not the only one among them noted for his pious adherence to the forms of the faith; and not to mention the interior, the coasts of the Polar Sea are dotted with "sacred promontories,"—Sviatoi Nos,—and with bays and headlands named after favourite saints. Towards their fellow-men, however, the rule of might was their only law. They slew and plundered and burned their way from one side of Asia to the other without pity or remorse. Their most intrepid marches and voyages were sullied by some act of cruelty or rapacity committed on the unfortunate.

Thus Deshnef had no sooner completed his daring voyage to the Anadir than he proceeded to levy *yassak*

from a people called the Anauli, whom he found living on its banks. "As the tribe, though not numerous, was nevertheless stubborn,"—that is, in the matter of paying tribute,—“they were in a short time exterminated,” is the simple statement of the narrator of the transaction, who has evidently a high sense of the merits of the method pursued. When Captain Billings was despatched by the Empress Catherine in 1785, to discover or take possession of such unappropriated “coasts and islands” as he might discover in the neighbourhood of the North Pacific, he found the same ruthless process of Russification still going on, though the scene had been shifted as far east as the Aleutian Islands. “The unfortunate islanders,” he reported, “are living in a state of abject slavery under the Promyschleni. There is no name so dreadful to the natives as that of a *perevodshik*, or leader of a band of hunters. Immediately on their arrival they send the natives out on the chase, and then take by force the youngest and most handsome of the women. The barbarity of these subduers to the Crown of Russia is not to be described.”

More honourable to Russia and her hardy sons is the record of explorations by land and sea by which were traced the long outline of the Siberian coast, the great estuaries, the low shelving shores, and shallow bays full of grounded drift-ice, the off-lying islands, and the headlands jutting far out into the heavy “Polar pack.” Here there was seldom any living thing to dispute their progress save an occasional bear or walrus; the cold and darkness, the hunger and exposure, the snow-storms and “ice-nips,” the scurvy and the snow blindness, the lonely isolation and hopelessness of succour,

supplied quite enough of the elements of peril and hardship to suit the keenest appetite for adventure without the prospect of meeting a human foe.

The Russians were not first in the field in prosecuting this important section of Arctic exploration, nor had they the honour of placing the finishing touch to the work of discovery. The most famous of the early voyages of the English and Dutch navigators are those of Stephen Burrough, who in 1556 reached Vaygatz Strait; of Pet and Jackman, who in 1580 passed through another entrance to the Kara Sea, between Vaygatz Island and the mainland; and of Willem Barents, who in 1594 pushed a little distance into the Kara Sea, until, as he conjectured, "he was not far from Cape Tabin, which is the exterior angle of Tartary, whence the coast declines towards the kingdom of Cathay," and two years later perished with part of his ship's company in a little hut, which only the other day was found standing almost intact at the northern extremity of Novaya Zemlia, and has been removed bodily to a museum at Amsterdam; also, Henry Hudson, in 1607-9, made unsuccessful attempts to pass round the northern end of Novaya Zemlia.

In all these enterprises the prime object was to discover a "North-East Passage" to India, by which the Hollanders and English dreamed they might out-distance the Portuguese and Spaniards in grasping the riches of the East, which had been laid open to their southern rivals by the discovery of the sea-passage round the Cape of Good Hope. They succeeded only in peering, as it were, through the grating into the weltering chaos of ice that filled the seas to the north of Siberia, and

in convincing the old navigators that no practicable channel of trade could be found to the northward of the dominions of the "Duke of Muscovy." Half a century after Hudson's time the attempt was renewed by the Danes. In 1676 Captain John Wood, an Englishman, encouraged by a story told him by a Dutch skipper, who had been in captivity in Corea, that whales were taken in the Sea of Tartary, in which were found European harping-irons, and by the fact that "he had heard a Dutchman relate that he had been under the Pole itself, and that it was as warm there as it was at Amsterdam in summer time," followed in the same track; and then for exactly two centuries the problem of finding a North-East Passage was abandoned as visionary.

Even in Burrough's days Russian *loddies* or fishing-vessels were found frequenting the entrance to the Kara Sea. The first authenticated instance of the Cossacks having launched upon the Siberian seas took place, as has been mentioned, from the Yenisei. Then the Kolima—where, in 1644, Michael Staduchin built a *simovie* or winter station on the site now occupied by the town of Nishni-Kolimski—became the centre from which numerous adventurous voyages were made along the coasts to the east and west, the first expedition being under the leadership of a fur-hunter named Ignatief, who brought back exciting news—"the existence of a nation rich in sea-horses' teeth"—that made the teeth of the restless conquerors of Siberia themselves water with envy. Though walrus ivory—not the hope of fame or zeal for discovery—was the vulgar allurements that tempted the fur-hunters on from

cape to cape, between the threatening pack-ice and the barren rocks, their achievements may compare in patient endurance and determination with the most heroic deeds in maritime history. The *shittiki* employed in Deshnef's days were clumsy boats hollowed from the trunk of a tree, or formed of planks sewn together by twisted osiers, fastened to the timbers by leathern straps, and calked with moss, the cordage composed of thongs of elk leather, the sails of reindeer-skin, and the anchor of the knotty root of a tree weighted with a large stone.

In these primitive craft, however, before 1734, the mouths of all the rivers flowing into the Polar Ocean had been visited, and expeditions made in *narti* or light dog-sledges over the ice in search of a "great land" containing trees and human inhabitants and herds of reindeer, supposed to exist to the northward. In that year began the series of scientific investigations, at the instance of the Russian Government, to clear up the obscure geography of the north coast of Asia. The Empress Anne sent forth, under the directions of the Dane Behring, four expeditions, most of which were incessantly employed for ten years in surveying the Siberian coasts. In every instance the leaders first appointed succumbed to fatigue or gave up the enterprise in despair, and success was only attained after repeated and disastrous failures. Mouravief sailed from Archangel for the Obi in 1734; but it was not till 1739 that the vessels returned to the Dwina, under their third set of commanders, after visiting the Obi. Simultaneously Ovzyn started from the Obi to reach the Yenisei and double Cape Taimyr; and his mate Minin, in the close of 1740, brought back the expedition, which had turned while only a degree short

of the goal, the crew fearing, from the dazzling blaze of the sun on the snow, that they would become blind.

The division of the survey that sailed westward from the Lena was attended with fortunes more tragic and more brilliant. The commander, Prontchistchef, and his young wife who accompanied him, died of fatigue and exposure. But a new chief, Lieutenant Chariton Laptef, pushed on till his vessel was wrecked in 1741 near the northern extremity of the continent; whence, crossing the Taimyr Peninsula, he marched his party safely to Mangaseia, on the Yenisei, whence next year he despatched to the north his assistant Tchelyuskin, who ascertained that the Siberian coast is bounded throughout by the ocean, and had the honour of giving his name to the "uttermost part of the earth" in the Old World. The duty of the fourth expedition was, by proceeding eastwards from the Lena, to reach Behring Strait. The original party, with their leader Lassinius, perished almost to a man of scurvy. Another Laptef—Demetrius—carried on the enterprise, and persisted with it until 1743. Deshnef's exploit, of a hundred years earlier, still remained unapproached.

Not more successful, so far as regards the discovery of a navigable water-way to the north of Siberia, were the Russian naval expeditions that prosecuted the work of exploration from the side of the Pacific. It was about the year 1696 that the Cossacks of Anadirsk began a series of expeditions, under their chiefs Morosko, Atlassef, Staritzin, and Kobelef, by which, within ten years, the peninsula of Kamschatka was subdued and annexed; and a Russian merchant named Kolessof, fitting out in 1713 an expedition in little vessels of skin, braved the dangers

of these cold and foggy eastern seas, and was rewarded with the discovery of the Kurile Isles, and brought back accounts of a people habited in silk and bearing swords.

Word of this reached St. Petersburg, where already the active brain of Peter the Great was exercised with schemes for turning to account the literally boundless possessions of Russia in Asia. With his own hand he drew up a few days before his death instructions "for examining the coasts to the north and east, to see whether they were not contiguous to America, since their end was not known;" and in accordance with the directions of the dead Czar, Behring in 1728 built a vessel at Okotsk, and conveyed his party to the Kamschatka River, there transporting himself to another vessel, in which he sailed through the strait that has since borne his name, without, however, suspecting, owing to the thickness of the weather, that the American coast was so near. Curiosity was aroused anew at the Russian court by a Japanese junk laden with silks being cast away on the Kamschatkan coast, the crew of which were massacred by the Cossacks. Vessels were sent out in 1739 to visit, and open trade with, these new neighbours; and the Japanese heaped "coals of fire" on the heads of their first visitors from Russia by showing them every token of good will, entertaining them at banquets where they were served with fruit, confections, and wine, in vessels of porcelain, and paying for all they received in their brass money.

Then, a year later, Behring made his second voyage, steering first for "Teixara," a great land in the Northern Pacific which a Portuguese, Dom Joao da Gama, had declared he had seen; and failing to find Teixara, as has been the lot of every navigator since, he pushed on



eastward until he arrived under the lee of a stupendous mountain range, including one snow-covered peak, than which, says Behring, "I have not seen in all Siberia a more lofty mountain." In point of fact he had reached the North American coast at Mount St. Elias; and from this point northward the land was claimed for the Czar by right of discovery, and formed till the other day the great "fur preserve" of the Imperial Fur Company, the Russian equivalent of the Hudson Bay Company. On this voyage, which, as we shall see, ended most disastrously, the high land of one of the Aleutian Islands was first sighted, looming through fogs. Forty years later our own Captain Cook followed in the track of Behring, and entering the strait, reported his vessel the *Discovery* "on the 11th of August 1778, at noon, midway between the two continents of Asia and America, each being seven leagues distant." Cook pushed westward in short boards between the ice and the Siberian shore, having in sight "prodigious numbers of sea-horses," that "lay in herds of many thousands on the ice, huddling one over another like swine, and roared or brayed very loud, so that at night or in foggy weather they gave the first notice of the ice." But in spite of the guidance of the walruses, he found the ice closing in on him so fast that he gave up the attempt to reach Europe by this route.

Subsequent exploring ships—Russian, British, and American—that entered the seas north of Behring Strait have fared no better; indeed, such had been the constant impediments encountered by navigators beyond "Cook's farthest," that Burney, so late as 1819, was positively convinced that somewhere between this point and Cape Chelagskoi there must exist an isthmus, form-

ing a continuous land communication between Asia and America.

Meanwhile the Cossack adventurers on the Lena and the Kolima had found something new to stimulate their spirit of daring. A rich store of mammoth bones had been discovered in 1750 by the merchant Liakhov in the tundra. Twenty years later this same enterprising trader, happening to be on business on the shores of the Polar Sea between the Iana and Indigirka rivers, saw a large herd of reindeer approaching over the ice from the north. The traditions of a "great land" to the north occurred to him, and an expedition was fitted out that led to the discovery of the Liakhov Islands, better known as New Siberia.

This remote group, with its "wooden mountains" and mounds of driftwood and mammoth bones strewn on its shores, was thoroughly and scientifically examined by Hedenström in 1809, and by Lieutenant Anjou<sup>t</sup> in 1821-3; while, simultaneously with Anjou, Lütke completed the examination of Novaya Zemlia, and Von Wrangell established the continuity of the sea from the Atlantic to Behring Strait, and made the first organized attempts to reach a high latitude in dog-sledges.

These, and other explorers who have tried to advance northward over the ice from Siberia, have invariably found, at a certain distance from the coast, one impassable obstacle to their progress. The horizon to the north would be covered with dense vapour, and the winds from the same quarter come laden with moisture. Flights of geese and other water-fowl would also be seen wending their way south, as from some favourite resort under the Pole, while the ice under foot would become thin and moist and broken up by lanes of water. At length, when

some coigne of vantage on an ice-hummock would open a prospect ahead, there would be seen, in Von Wrangell's words, "a wide, immeasurable ocean spread before the gaze—a fearful and magnificent but to us a melancholy spectacle—an agitated ocean, where fragments of ice of enormous size floated, or were thrown with awful violence against the edge of the ice-field."

From this time the "great Polynia" or "open water" began to cut a considerable figure in the discussions of geographical societies and schemes of Polar discovery. If an entrance to it could be found from the Atlantic, it was said, a fair sail might be made to the Pacific, and the North-East Passage become an accomplished fact. The daring voyages recently made by skippers of the Norwegian whaling-craft, such as Carlsen and Johannisen, who sailed round the north of Novaya Zemlia, and found an apparently limitless open sea stretching to the eastward, seemed to hint that the problem that had baffled Burrough and Barents was about to be solved.

Solved at length it was, though the "Polynia" only contributed indirectly to the result. Professor Norden-skiöld, one of the princes of Arctic discovery, an experienced seaman and profound scientific inquirer, concentrated his attention on the difficulty which the ice had so long presented to the navigation of the Siberian seas. Two preliminary voyages, in which he forced a passage through the Kara Sea, which Von Baer had in 1837 pronounced an "ice-cellar," convinced him that if he started late in the year, when the autumn floods in the rivers had moved the ice out to sea—room for it being found in the "open water" to the north—the whole distance to the Pacific might be run in a single season.

On the 4th of July 1878 the little steamer *Vega* sailed from Gothenburg. Before the end of the month she had passed the gates of the Kara Sea. On the 19th of August flags were hoisted and a salute fired as Cape Tchelyuskin or Severo—the northernmost point of the Old World—was rounded, the sun coming out from the fog, and glinting on land and sea alike free from ice; on the 6th of September, Cape Chelagskoi the "impassable," which no keel had visited since Deshnef had passed in 1648, was cleared; the North Cape of Cook was left behind on the 12th; and on the 27th of September the *Vega* was frozen in, within a few miles of the open water in Behring Strait.

In two months the professor had cleared at a rush the space which previous explorers had been laboriously occupied in mapping out for three hundred years. He had bided his time, and caught fortune literally "at the flood." The sliding doors of the ice moved back to let him pass, and were again jammed hard against the shore just before he had time to escape. Next year, however, he extricated himself, and sailed prosperously home to Europe by the Suez Canal, thus circumnavigating the continent of Asia, and establishing by his splendid skill and courage the soundness of his contention that the navigation of the seas from Norway to Japan is practicable, if not safe. It is a galling reflection to Russia that she has by her own act lost the credit of placing this magnificent copestone on her work of discovery. Nordenskiöld is a Finlander, a born subject of the Czar; but while still a youth at Helsingfors University, he was expatriated and compelled to carry his fortunes and his talents elsewhere, for daring to hold "liberal" opinions.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE CHINESE FRONTIERS.



ON the southern frontier of Siberia, marching for thousands of miles with the dominions of the Emperor of China, Russia is still engaged in the task of defining the limits of her territory, by means of scientific expeditions and diplomatic missions, and occasionally, though only in cases of emergency, by the despatch of a military force.

The relations between these two Asiatic Powers have always been of a peculiar kind. Russia has played her game with admirable patience. While cautiously avoiding a collision with China, she has constantly enlarged her frontiers at the expense of her neighbour, and has peacefully secured commercial and diplomatic privileges which other Western nations have only obtained at the price of costly wars. China began by arrogating the rights of suzerainty over the Czar, and has ended by falling gradually under the ascendancy of the Northern Power. Russia has bit by bit established herself along the whole northern slope of the Altai chain. Few of the streams draining to the Arctic Ocean have now their rise within the territory of the Celestials. The wild and rugged scenes in which the tributaries of the

Irish and the Obi take their rise among the precipices, glaciers, and frozen tarns of Cholsoun and the Little Altai, with the untold mineral wealth of these mountains, and the rich and beautiful valleys into which their dark gorges open up, are now in the undisputed possession of the Czar. So likewise are all but the most remote feeders of the Yenisei, and the whole of the fertile region surrounding Lake Baikal.

Beyond the snow-clad summits of the Altai, Russia has not cared to go, at least as yet. There is little to tempt her in the sterile steppes of the great table-land beyond, dotted over with isolated salt lakes, round which the fragments of Mongol tribes, Kalmuks, Eleuts, and Kalkas nomadize and find scanty pasture for their flocks and herds, and merging into the desolation of the great Desert of Gobi, the "Dry Sea" of the Chinese, which is more perilous to traverse than the Frozen Ocean itself. But Russia has already planted a foot within the fruitful valley of the Ili, thus, as it were, turning the western flank of the Altai, and opening a road to Yarkand and Kashgar. She has drawn her frontier along the northern bank of the Amoor, and, crossing that stream near its mouth, has pushed forth a long inquiring finger towards Corea.

It was about the year 1640 that Russia began to come into contact with the Chinese in these regions. For twenty years previous the Cossack adventurers had been engaged in desultory conflict with the tribes on the Upper Yenisei and in the neighbourhood of Lake Baikal, more especially with the Buriats, who had rendered themselves independent of China. Already the Buriats had imported the Buddhist religion and the civilization

of the Middle Empire, and possessed a written language and literature. To this day this people, who form a numerous and influential section of the population of the Transbaikial region, dress themselves in resplendent robes of flowered silk, and are more Chinese than Russian in type and customs, and perhaps in sympathies. In 1643 a band of adventurers, under Michael Poyarkof, crossed the Yablonnoi range and descended on the Amoor; and a few years later they were followed by the Cossack hetman Khabarof, who traced the river to its outlet, and expelling the original Tungus possessors, fortified himself at a place called Albassin, on the north bank of the stream, about a hundred miles below the junction of its two great branches, the Shilka and the Argun.

Albassin became the theatre of a struggle that lasted many generations between the Cossack and the Chinaman for the possession of the Amoor. Needy and greedy adventurers thronged hither, attracted by a milder climate and a richer and more varied vegetation than anything they had found farther north, but chiefly by the great abundance of game and fur animals, and the prosperous forays that could be made across the river into Mantchuria. The Chinese, who had never surrendered their claims, determined to root out this den of freebooters. An army from the Flowery Land captured Albassin in 1658, after a two years' siege, and carried part of the garrison prisoners to Peking. Even this loss became Russia's gain; for the little band of exiled Albassins became the foundation of the notorious "Ecclesiastical Mission," on whose account the Russians have claimed and obtained the right to erect churches

and schools for the Orthodox in the Middle Kingdom. Twice Albassin was rebuilt by the Cossacks, and twice it was recaptured and destroyed by military forces sent out by the Pekin Government; and at length it was secured to China, along with the whole territory on the north bank of the Amoor, by the first international treaty entered into between the two Powers, signed in 1689 at Nertchinsk.

Other objects than mere plunder were beginning to attract the notice of the Russians on this southern frontier. The existence of rich ores of gold, silver, copper, and other precious metals, had been discovered in the Altai Mountains and in Daouria, as the region to the south-east of Lake Baikal was then generally called. The sands of the Nertcha, near the junction of which with the Shilka Nertchinsk is situated, were by-and-by washed for gold, and the occupation of spoiling the mandarins lost its attractions. Gems of great brilliancy and size, amethysts and topazes, garnets and emeralds might be picked up by the industrious treasure-seeker. Mines of malachite, porphyry, and lapis-lazuli were discovered and worked; beautiful blocks of green, cream-coloured, and purple jasper were met with among the chasms and precipices of the Altai, waiting only transportation to Europe to make the fortunes of the finders.

The great works at Barnaul, where later all the ores extracted from the mines of the Altai and Eastern Siberia were brought to be smelted, were established. When our countryman Atkinson visited the place twenty-five years ago, he found that six caravans annually left Barnaul for St. Petersburg laden with the precious metals,



and that to his eyes the mining population of the Altai appeared "more wealthy, more cleanly, and surrounded by more comforts than any other people in the empire." Convict labour had not then been introduced into the Altai mines; and the change that has since taken place, if it has helped to develop the mineral wealth of the region, has scarcely improved its society. Mr. Lansdell, on his visit in 1881, found that from twelve hundred to fifteen hundred men (not convicts) were engaged in the Crown mines, that supply five smelting-works—four for silver, and one for copper. The smelting of gold is carried on in a small room, about twenty feet square, at fires not larger than those in a laundry copper; and in the strong room are sometimes stored as much as four or five tons of gold, worth, say, half a million sterling.

Barnaul possesses, among other amenities, an interesting museum of minerals. In its shops may be bought Edinburgh ale, Dublin porter, and French champagne, of course at exorbitant prices. On the other hand, beef may be had at a halfpenny per pound, and grouse at twopence a brace, and cleared black land hired at three-pence-halfpenny per English acre.

In Siberia whole towns disappear in a twinkling in some great fire that runs its course among the wooden dwellings, and rise again from their ashes with magic rapidity. The "inflammable materials" contained in them have been largely increased since the Government have begun to export Nihilists thither; and the great fires which have recently caused such damage at Krasnojarsk, Irbit, Irkutsk, and other places, have been confidently attributed to the presence of these irrepressible incendiaries. By the great conflagration at Irkutsk last

year, it was estimated that three million worth of property was destroyed and twenty thousand persons rendered homeless.

Irkutsk was not founded till the close of the seventeenth century, and the earlier and finer of its public buildings were the work of the Polish and Swedish captives sent hither by Peter the Great after Poltava. As befits the official capital of Siberia, it occupies a commanding position on the banks of the broad and deep Angara, some distance below the point where it flows out of Lake Baikal to join the Yenisei. It is in the centre of a fertile, richly-wooded, and well-watered country, full of the most charming scenery; it contains a fair share of the manufacturing industries in which the Siberian towns are energetically engaged; in the suburbs are the mansions of wealthy Russian merchants, who have surrounded themselves in this distant spot with all the luxuries of Europe, and whose gardens in summer are ablaze with blossom; and on the whole it deserves the praises that have been so profusely bestowed on it by travellers.

The commercial importance of Irkutsk is due to its neighbourhood to the Eastern Siberian mines, and to the traffic with China. The Russians were not long in convincing themselves that a much more profitable mode of dealing with the Chinese than their first coarse method of plundering them would be to open up a peaceful trade. To attain this end, Peter the Great had employed all his diplomacy; there were long and pretty fencing between the negotiants on either side, and wordy and interminable discussions on questions of etiquette, "ko-towing," and the exchange of refugees and

deserters. It was two years after Peter's death that the important Treaty of Kiachta was settled between the Count Vladislavitch Ragousinsky and the plenipotentiaries of the "Bogdo Khan;" and it remained for about a hundred and thirty years the basis of the commercial and diplomatic relations of China and Russia. Under it, marts for the exchange of Russian and Chinese goods were established at the adjoining towns of Kiachta, in the territory of the Czar, and Maimatchin, within the frontier of the Descendant of the Sun. Through this channel the great bulk of the overland trade with China has continued to flow. Furs and manufactured goods from Europe are collected at Irkutsk, and are forwarded to the frontier by way of Lake Baikal.

This magnificent lake—the "Holy Sea" of the surrounding peoples—is girded in by high mountains, and the basaltic cliffs along its shore rise in some places from deep water to a height of seven or eight hundred feet. It is subject to terrific storms; and it was with feelings of astonishment that the Siberians and Mongolians saw the first steamer, built by an enterprising merchant named Menchnikof, making her way across the lake with a cargo of goods destined for Peking, in the teeth of a heavy gale. The wares are conveyed to the frontier on horseback in summer or in sledges during winter, and stored in the government magazines at Kiachta or in the neighbouring custom-house at Troitskosavsk; while tea in chests and bricks, rhubarb, silks, and other goods brought for barter by the Chinese merchants, are carried through the Great Wall at Kalgan, and across the sandy desert by way of the holy Buddhist city of Ourga in caravans of camels, guided by shaggy Khalka drivers, to Mai-

matchin. Free intercourse is permitted from sunrise to sunset between the two border emporiums: after that hour the Chinese shut the gate of Maimatchin, and the Cossacks close the egress from Kiachta. The merchants from Moscow and other distant places in Russia usually reach Kiachta in the beginning of February; and before the middle of March their transactions are completed, and long caravans are on their march towards Irbit and Nishni-Novgorod.

There is every outward and visible sign that this international trade is profitable to both parties. The stores of Maimatchin—a genuine Chinese town of houses of unburned brick, faced with wooden screens painted over with grotesque monsters—are bursting with valuable wares; and the owners are portly, pig-tailed personages, who think nothing of laying a pair of chopsticks, for their guest and setting before him a banquet of sixty-four dishes. That the Russian merchants of Kiachta are likewise liberal and well-to-do may be judged from the fact that they have built a cathedral—the finest in Eastern Siberia—at a cost of £150,000, and adorned it with an altar-screen of gold, with doors weighing two thousand pounds in solid silver.

The Russians did not permanently remain satisfied with the advantages they had gained by the Treaty of Kiachta. By 1848, it is known, the Government had made up their mind to recover their hold on the Amoor, and preparations towards that end were made. While these were being completed, they operated actively by means of scientific expeditions. Russian officers ascended the highest summits of the Altai chain, explored its most accessible gorges, made excursions into the steppes within

the Chinese frontier, and brought back interesting information regarding the routes available for trade or military operations.

One of the latest and most distinguished of these explorers is Prejevalsky, who has traversed Mongolia and the Kokonor district, visited the half-fabulous Lake Lob, which receives the drainage of Eastern Turkestan, and to whose banks he found a wandering party of "Old Believers" had preceded him in search of the "New Jerusalem," and who has just returned from a journey into a part of Thibet never before reached by a European traveller.

The accounts that were brought back of the extreme beauty and fertility of Amoorland stimulated the zeal of the Siberian officials for the enlargement of their frontier in this quarter. In 1854 General Mouravief, Governor-General of Eastern Siberia, himself undertook an exploration of the river on a scale so imposing that the Chinese dared not oppose it, and exploration merged gently into acquisition. In 1857 the first regular colony was settled on the river, and the Tientsin Treaty of the year following formally secured the command of this great waterway, two thousand two hundred miles in length—the only outlet which Siberia possesses into an unfrozen sea. "Such," in the words of Professor Martens of St. Petersburg, "has been the recompense found for the patience, the indulgence, and the disinterestedness, of which Russia has given proof in regard to China." A later step in this "disinterested" process was the acquisition of a strip of the Mantchurian sea-coast south of the Amoor by the Treaty of Peking in 1860, negotiated by General Ignatief, afterwards Russian ambassador at Constanti-

nople, and now, since the removal from office of Loris Melikoff, the most powerful man in Russia after the Czar.

The expectations formed of the Amoor region have scarcely been fulfilled. Atkinson, Lansdell, and others have described with enthusiasm the extraordinary beauty and grandeur of its scenery, and its exhaustless animal, vegetable, and mineral wealth. In regard to the precious metals, it is represented as a second California; for cotton growing, more suited than the choicest parts of Africa, if not of America. The dense forests of the maple, lime, pine, and oak constitute a source of incalculable future wealth; the pastures of deep grass, never cropped except by wild animals, are capable of supporting numberless flocks of cattle; and the river teems with fish. In spite of all this luxuriance, the banks have a desolate aspect. Nowhere in 1862 was to be seen token of man or his work, save here and there on the lower course the hut of a Tungus or Giliak fisher or hunter, or, near the Soungari river, a few Chinese junks, temples, and villages. It was prophesied that, within ten years of the annexation, "the aspect of the region would be materially changed: flourishing towns would be seen on the banks; the vessels moored by the shore would show that the people were actively engaged in commerce and other industrial pursuits; while the white churches with their numerous turrets and green domes would prove that religion and civilization had taken the place of idolatry and superstition."

Twenty years have passed, and the fortunes of the province of the Amoor do not yet seem absolutely assured. Colonists have come in considerable numbers,

but some of them have gone again. Towns have been built, and lines of steamers established; but it is complained that the amount of trade is not always sufficient to keep them profitably employed. The great disadvantage is the remoteness from markets where the produce of the region could be disposed of. What is the use, it is said, of raising magnificent crops, when no merchant would pay the enormous cost of bringing the grain to his doors, even if he got the article for nothing? Then it has to be remembered that while the climate of the middle Amoor is temperate, its sources and its mouth are practically in the Arctic regions. All this will not prevent the district from having a great future; it only proves that some of the expectations regarding it were formed prematurely.

The latest diplomatic passages between Russia and China threatened at one time to end in war. In a corner of High Asia, where the Altai and Tianshan ranges overlap each other, is the valley of the Ili River, flowing down to the sandy waste in which lies the great salt lake Balkash, through the province of Kuldja, the most highly prized of all the possessions of China west of the Great Wall. This district of Soungaria, as it is also called, is supposed to have been the cradle of the Teuton races. From it the Kalmuks migrated to the Lower Volga; and thither the remnant of them returned again on the occasion of their famous exodus in 1771—, a circumstance that nearly led to a rupture between the Empress Catherine and China. The frontiers of the Flowery Land had not long before been extended by the conquests of the great emperor Kien Lun, until they embraced not only Soungaria, but the whole of Eastern

Turkestan, up to the borders of Bokhara; and the wanderers from Europe, finding their old home in the valley already settled by military colonists from Mantchuria and the banks of the Amoor, deported criminals from the Middle Kingdom, and Tarantchis, "millet-growers" or agriculturists from Kashgar, retired to the high rich pastures above, where they still live under the name of Torgots.

The centre of authority was at Ili, or New Kuldja, where the Mantchu Governor-General of Chinese Tartary lived in great state, though the turbulent character and many quarrels of the score of nationalities under his charge made his office anything but a bed of roses. Among the other races were the Dungans, a people of rather mysterious origin—Mohammedan in religion, Chinese in nearly every other respect—who are widely scattered over the empire from Peking to Yarkand.

About twenty years ago, China was seized with tremors and convulsions throughout its whole bulk, and seemed on the eve of dissolution. Insurrection spread like a wave of fire from one end of the Emperor's territory to the other; and the central government seemed powerless to arrest it. Kashgar and the neighbouring cities fell into the hands of the bold Khokandian adventurer Yakoo Beg, who set up an independent principality, which he maintained intact for twelve years. The Dungans had led the insurrection in Kuldja, and, assisted by the Tarantchis, massacred the whole Mantchu garrison. The Dungan leader told Mr. Schuyler, with a chuckle, how they had captured the city of Ili after a two years' siege. "That morning there were in it seventy-five thousand people, with the



army; that evening not a soul was left alive." The Chinese governor, after the manner of Chinese governors, had composedly applied a lighted match to a mine in his palace, and had blown himself up with his family.

At the time of the American traveller's visit nothing was left of the fine city except heaps of ruins of temples, covered with fragments of pottery and charred human bones that encumbered the broad streets. The remains of Chinese industry and art have not wholly disappeared, however; and one coming to a town on the Ili from Russian Turkestan is struck by the change, even in the present reduced circumstances of Kuldja. "Instead of narrow, crooked streets, there were broad, straight avenues shaded by trees; instead of windowless houses built of mud, the blank walls of which stared one in the face at every turn, there were fine buildings of brick, beautifully carved and moulded, roofed with tiles, and with latticed windows and porticos. Instead of female forms swathed in long shapeless dressing-gowns, and with faces hidden by black horse-hair veils, there were stout, healthy, and smiling women chatting over their marketing, the bright orange-coloured mari-golds in their wonderful coiffures, or their coquettish little caps, contrasting well with the indigo blue of their gowns. Instead of Sarts and Uzbeks in gowns and turbans, there were Chinese and Dungans in wadded petticoats, short jackets, long moustaches, and pig-tails."

The valley, irrigated and planted with grain crops, fruit trees, and artificial forests, was a paradise; but for several years it became a Pandemonium. The Dungans and Tarantchis took to massacring one another, the latter getting the better of the struggle; Yakoob Beg seemed

on the point of invading it; and the population had been reduced by constant butcheries to about a fourth of what it was a few years before, when General Kolpakowsky stepped in, and almost without resistance occupied the province, declaring that Russia intended to hold it only temporarily until China could re-establish her authority.

China showed more vitality and tenacity of purpose than some of her neighbours had expected, or perhaps even hoped for. One by one her rebellious provinces were brought again into subjection, amid terrible slaughters and devastation. An army under the victorious General Tso set out on the march across the deserts to reduce the revolted districts of the west, planting corn and waiting to reap the crop when supplies failed, and doing his work leisurely and thoroughly. Yakoob Beg died while preparing to resist the shock of the Imperialists' advance, and Kashgar fell an easy prey to the Chinese, who were now again complete masters in Eastern Turkestan.

In the high humour naturally aroused by such feats, they demanded from Russia restitution of the province that had been seized. Negotiations were entered into, and under a treaty signed by the Chinese ambassador Chung How at Livadia, Russia retained possession of a substantial part of Kuldja, and China agreed to pay a heavy indemnity to meet the costs of Russia's occupation. Great was the wrath at Peking when the terms of this bargain were made known: the government refused to ratify the treaty; the too complying Chung How was thrown into prison and condemned to death; and there were preparations for war all along the Chinese frontier.

Fortunately, however, for China more moderate counsels prevailed, due greatly, it is believed, to the remonstrances of Colonel Gordon—"Chinese Gordon"—who rushed out to the East to use his influence in the cause of peace; to the St. Petersburg Court, also, is due the credit of being willing to reopen negotiations. Under a new treaty, negotiated by the Marquis Tseng, China obtains restitution of all but a small fragment of her Kuldja territory; Russia receives concessions of important commercial privileges in Mongolia, and an indemnity; and the curtain falls, meanwhile, on the two Powers again reconciled.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### LIFE IN THE TUNDRA AND THE FOREST.



It is an open secret that it is not in every part of Siberia that one can persuade the vine to grow ; that the gardens of the Ili valley, and the sheltered pastures and glades of rich loam on the banks of the Amoor, are not to be found through the whole vast expanse of Russia's Asiatic dominions ; and that even these favoured localities are visited by extremes of temperature which would be trying to a European constitution. But even the Siberian climate admits of something being said in its favour. Everywhere, it is true, the winters are long and cold. Snow lies for many months in the year over the whole region in an unbroken sheet from the Frozen Ocean to the Altai Mountains, and from the Ural range to Behring Strait. The thermometer ranges excessively low, even in the extreme southern districts. But throughout most of the region fitted for colonization the cold is of a "dry" kind, like that of the North-West Territory of Canada, and therefore neither so prejudicial to health nor so painful to endure as it would be in a moisture-laden atmosphere like ours.

Winter is the season when long journeys may be

made most expeditiously, and often most comfortably. The rivers from the Obi to the Amoor are covered with a thick crust of ice, and become the highways for sledge-traffic. The inequalities of the land, also, are smoothed over by the snow, and the sledge glides easily along tracks where at other seasons the traveller's bones are threatened with dislocation from the jolting of the telega. Winter is also a favourite time for the trapper and hunter. The furs of the sable and gray squirrel are in their finest condition, and the herds of wild reindeer, elk, and moufflon may be tracked with ease as they roam in search of the scanty herbage which they scrape from under the snow with their feet. The cattle, which form the chief source of the wealth of the Yakut and other tribes on the Lena and Yenisei, are generally housed for the winter; but their troops of hardy horses are left to pick up their living like the beasts of chase, and like them regularly cast their shaggy coats and get a new winter suit when the cold weather returns.

Spring—if the brief period that intervenes while the snow melts, and the Arctic cold suddenly gives place to the semi-tropical warmth of summer, can be called by that name—is a much more disagreeable season. The streams are all now running in heavy flood, and their overflow converts large tracts of the lowlands on their banks into temporary lakes. Masses of ice, great forest trees, and driftwood of every description are hurried along with the current; and the quantity of water brought down is sufficient to loosen the grip of the Polar ice on the northern coast, to float away the floes and bergs to some distance from the shore,

and to freshen the waters of the Polar Ocean for hundreds of miles.

The swamps of the tundra lands thaw, on the surface at least, and become impassable for man or beast; even the splay-footed reindeer and elk sometimes sink through the miry moss and flounder into more hopeless depths with each effort to escape. Only the birds of the air can pass over them in safety. This is the season when they come in countless flocks from the warmer southern countries, even from the Indian lowlands, to breed and rear their young under the shadow of the birch and pine forests, or along the margin of the rivers and the sea. Colonel Prejevalsky watched them at Lake Lob—the central hollow of the great basin of Eastern Turkestan—as the myriads of birds of different species, chiefly swimmers and waders, arrived in regular succession, and rested a few days by the lake to recruit their strength after the exhausting passage of the Himalayas, and before resuming their flight across the arid steppes of Mongolia and the snowy heights of the Altai. Messrs. Seeböhm and Harvie-Brown, who have lately studied the movements of the migratory hosts on the Petchora, found that their arrival on the breeding-grounds and their departure thence are also accurately timed by each species of bird.

For a while the northern forests and tundra lands are no more empty and silent; they actually swarm with bird life. "Although," remark the latter authors, "the number of species breeding within the Arctic Circle is comparatively small, the number of individuals is vast beyond conception. Birds go to the Arctic regions to breed, not by thousands, but by

millions." Captain Markham gives a still more surprising account of the marvellous abundance of guillemots and other birds on the cliffs of Novaya Zemlia early in June, when the snow was only clearing away from the slopes of the hills. On the ledges of the limestone cliffs overlooking a bay in the "Matyushin Shar"—the strait separating the north and south islands—he says, could be seen "myriads of looms, so thickly clustered that the combination of their dark and white plumage made the face of the cliffs assume a 'pepper-and-salt' hue; whilst the water was dotted with numbers of these birds feeding, and the air was so thick with them, as they flew backwards and forwards, that it reminded me more of the swarming of hundreds of hives of bees than anything else. On the first discharge of our guns, a perfect cloud rose in front of us, completely obscuring the face of the cliff. The sound caused by this sudden flight can only be likened to the fall of water from some gigantic cascade. As they flew outward they actually struck us in the boats, whilst our victims tumbled about us like hail."

The cause of this great incursion of birds into the Arctic area is the extraordinary prodigality with which nature has provided for them their favourite food. No sooner has the ice broken on the river than salmon and other fish begin to make their way from the deep sea to their spawning-grounds up-stream in extraordinary shoals. The fish-eagles and lesser birds of prey, and the whole tribe of waders and swimmers, are busy from morning till night gorging themselves with food. When the winter snow clears away from the mossy heaths and low, scrubby forest, great stores of wild fruits, whortleberries, cloudberryes, crowberryes, bilberryes, rasps, and

currants are uncovered, and a rich feast is spread for the titmice, wheat-ears, thrushes, and other familiar birds that venture into these solitudes. Clouds of mosquitoes hover over the fens, and the insect-eating birds have only to open their bills to be satisfied.

The other denizens of the tundra are also awake and active, and eager in their outlook for food after their long winter abstinence. The white bear is abroad, hungry and lean after his sleep of three or four months, during which he has "lived on his own fat." He ventures out on the rotting ice-fields, cautiously stalking the keen-scented seals; or roams along the sea-beach or the river margin, seeking what he may devour. The herds of reindeer are out feeding on the young grass and herbs, and rapidly taking on fat.

Abundant and succulent pastures are to be found even in the dreariest parts of Siberia. Nordenskiöld found the banks of the Yenisei, in about seventy degrees north latitude, covered with grass "of a luxuriance to which he had seldom seen anything comparable;" and even at Cape Taimyr, the most northerly extremity of Asia, the mountains, two or three thousand feet in height, were free of snow to their summits, and animal and vegetable life was abundant. A brief touch of colour and beauty even visits the lugubrious tundra in the early summer, when the turf is often thickly strewn with bright blue, yellow, and pink flowers. Many flowering and other species of plants, indeed, have a more northerly range in Siberia than in the Scandinavian peninsula; and an improvement in the climate and vegetation may be looked for as cultivation spreads northward.



At this season it is not to be supposed that man, who makes his prey impartially of fish, flesh, and fowl, remains inactive. He, too, bestirs himself after the enforced inaction of the winter's cold and darkness, and sets to work to gather in his store of food against the returning time of scarcity. In these latitudes the summer is too brief for crops coming to maturity. The limit of grain-growing land stops short long within the limit of forests; though in some favourably situated spots corn may be raised close to the Arctic Circle, and the citizens of Yakutsk are able to boast of a few meagre vegetables in their "gardens." The sea, the river, and the heath are the harvest-fields of the Siberian, whether he is an indigenous inhabitant of the tundra or a Russian colonist. When the great flights of birds arrive, every inhabitant turns out in some districts with flintlock, bow and arrows, and other old-fashioned fowling implements, and immense numbers of wild geese, ducks, and swans are killed and "cured" for future use.

A Siberian village at these times resembles a hamlet in St. Kilda: there are feathers everywhere—in the air, in the water, on the ground, in the houses, and in the very food. The skins of the birds are stitched into warm winter garments by some of the tribes; where the eider-duck abounds, the down is a valuable article of commerce. The creatures of the land and water also yield trading wares, as well as food and raiment.

For the fish, indeed, that visit the Siberian streams in incredible numbers there is scarcely any market as yet. Even the salmon, the sturgeon, and other more valuable sorts, cannot be transported at a profit from the Obi and Yenisei until regular sea or railway communication has

been opened with these rivers. But for the inhabitants on their banks, and on the lower courses of the Lena and other streams draining into the Glacial Ocean, the "runs" yield a harvest without which it would be impossible to support life all the year round. Wooden stagings are erected along the river margins, and here the crews of fishermen collect, and, with extraordinary assiduity, ply their calling with net and boat, basket, line, and spear, for the short time that the fishing lasts, capturing in the early part of the season thousands of salmon and sea-trout, and in the autumn the herrings that come in vast quantities into the mouths of the streams.

Fish is the "staff of life" within the Arctic Circle; the very dogs live on it. Salt is precious in these countries, and the fish is generally preserved in a dried or frozen state, and is rarely cooked before being eaten. The visitor to a hospitable native *yurta* on the Lena or Kolima is regaled on frozen sturgeon's roe, dried reindeer tongue, and other tid-bits reserved for festive occasions; and though he may make a wry face or two at first, he soon learns to relish this hyperborean fare. He can never hope, however, to approach the natives in the quantity which they devour at a meal when food is abundant. A Russian traveller has asserted that he has seen a Yakut eat sixty fish at a sitting, when, as he naively remarks, he had himself much ado to dispose of ten. The inner bark of the larch is stripped off in the spring, and is kneaded up with the fish into a kind of cake, or made into a broth which, in spite of its turpentine flavour, is highly appreciated by those who have never partaken of anything more delicate. Other vegetable food the inhabitant of the tundra has seldom a chance of tasting.

The hardiest kinds of kitchen vegetables refuse to come to maturity so near to the Polar Ocean, and he has nothing better than a few aromatic herbs and edible roots to flavour his stew.

There are enterprising spirits who regularly venture out among the ice-floes in quest of the walrus and seal. Great boldness, as well as wariness and skill, is needed in these encounters ; for the sea-horse, with all his clumsiness of build, is an ugly antagonist in his own element. A blow from his down-hooked tusks might shatter a strong boat, much more the frail *baidars*—made of seal-skin or reindeer hide, and sewn with reindeer sinew—in which the Tchuktchis and other tribes of Eastern Siberia hunt the walrus. On the other hand, a fat walrus, harpooned and safely brought to shore, is a grand prize for the needy fisherman's family. Every part of the carcass, even the bones and offal, is turned to account. The inmates of the lucky hunter's hut gorge themselves with the raw blubber and fat ; the oil serves to keep the lamp alive during the winter darkness, and the rough skin is cut up into thongs for the reins and harness of the sledge, or fashioned into boots and leggings ; out of the intestines light upper waterproof garments for summer wear are made, and a strong durable thread is prepared from the sinews. The fine ivory of the tusks can be turned to many uses—forming tips to spears and harpoons, ornamental bowls to pipes, and neck adornments for the women ; but it is chiefly prized as an article of barter, by means of which the poor Samoyede, Yukahir, or Tchuktchi can provide himself with a few of the luxuries of warmer climes, too often only in the shape of the fieriest brandy and most pun-

gent Caucasian tobacco. The stranding or capture of a whale is an event which gives joy, not to a single *yurta*, but to a whole village; and practised hunters become men of weight and wealth in their own sphere by their success in the pursuit of the white bear, which they courageously follow over the hummocks, bring to bay, and skilfully despatch with their spears.

There are modes of gaining richness in "ivory," horn, and hide without braving the dangers of deceitful ice-fields and the teeth and claws of infuriated walrus and bear. Spread over a wide area of Siberia are spots where, heaped confusedly together, are found in vast deposits the remains of the strange creatures that roamed the forests at a time when, it is believed, the region enjoyed a much milder climate than at present. Many of the animal forms thus preserved are now extinct, or are represented by species found only in warm inter-tropical countries. Chief among these is the mammoth, a creature closely allied to and probably the progenitor of the Indian elephant, but larger even than that huge beast, bearing longer tusks with a marked upward curve, and covered with a thick fell of reddish hair, which seems to show that at its best the Siberian climate was much more severe than that of Southern Asia now is.

Remains of the rhinoceros, buffalo, and other large-boned animals of southern latitudes are also found, together with the bones of beasts like the bear, elk, and musk ox, which are still mainly confined to the cold north. It is after the rains and floods of spring that the mammoth "finds" are made. Sections of the clay banks forming the subsoil of the tundra are uncovered,

and portions of the shingly and sandy strata along the course of the rivers are washed away, and the great bones and tusks of the mammoth are left projecting through the freshly-washed earth, in the spot where some prehistoric flood had stranded them. It is supposed that the tundra was not actually the haunt of these hairy antediluvian monsters; that in fact in the days when they trampled the forests with their heavy steps, the tundra formed part of the ocean bed, and that it has been gradually formed by the receding of the sea and the washing down of soil by the Siberian rivers—a process which may still be seen in operation along the whole coast from the Kara Sea to Behring Strait.

However that may be, these remains are of extreme antiquity, and the wonderful thing is that not only are the bones of these extinct animals found embedded in the soil, but also portions of the hide and hair, and even the flesh in such a state of preservation that dogs have partaken of it. The explanation of this is that, as has already been stated, the soil in the northern parts of Siberia is hard frozen, even in the heat of summer, from a little way below the surface to an unknown depth; and specimens of earlier animal life of the region have thus been preserved for ages by the action of frost, to the edification of men of science, and the profit of the Cos-sack and Yakut ivory-seekers. The largest accumulations of mammoth bones have been found in the New Siberia or Liakhov Islands, lying to the north of the continent, between Cape Taimyr and the mouth of the Kolima.

One of these islands is said to be actually composed of skulls, ribs, and tusks, including, in addition to the remains of the animals already mentioned, bones

of horses, oxen, and sheep. For nearly a century and a half the fur-hunters have been in the habit of resorting to these islands from the mainland and bringing away sledge-loads of the "fossil ivory;" and the store seems as far as ever from being exhausted. It is said that the sea, after long-continued storms from the east, washes up a fresh supply of the bones from some hidden store in its bed to replace what has been carried away. It is even doubtful whether these most remote of Asiatic territories should be regarded as solid land, or as a crystallization of Siberian history. Sections of cliffs have been exposed, consisting of alternate layers of sand, and ice, and mammoth bones, and fossilized wood, and trunks of trees and other brushwood,—forming something between an island, a lumber raft, a museum of natural history, and a stranded iceberg. \*

Excursions after mammoth tusk and rhinoceros horn are, of course, only incidental events in the fur-hunter's life. The real business of the Cossack and native trappers is the setting of snares and traps for the many valuable fur animals that frequent the forests, the plains, and the rivers of Northern Siberia—chief among these being the sable, the stone marten, the ermine, the gray squirrel, the black, silver, and blue fox, the wolverine, the beaver, and the otter. Thousands of traps are annually baited along the streams and in the localities most frequented by the furry game, and long journeys are made to visit these and bring home the spoils. *Yassak* is still paid to government in the shape of sable and other skins by outlying tribes, and the surplus furs are eagerly bought up by the Russian merchants and agents from Yakutsk, Yeniseisk, and other Siberian towns.

When the summer is sufficiently far advanced for the ground to become consolidated, elk and reindeer hunting is in vogue on the tundra. After drought, a thin crust of hard earth is formed by the heat on the surface of the morasses, and over this the reindeer can make their way lightly and safely when changing pastures or fleeing from the hunters, who, if not accustomed to cross these quaking bogs, would be in imminent danger of slipping through into the miry gulf beneath.

A favourite time for attacking a herd is when it is crossing a stream. This has been described as a most exciting and even dangerous sport; and it is generally followed in autumn, when the deer have acquired their warm winter coats of fur, and begin to migrate in herds of many thousands from the plains to the shelter of the forests. When the herd is fairly in the water, the hunters break cover, and the most experienced dash into the stream in light canoes and attack the deer with short spears, while the rest of the party keep guard on the shore to despatch any wounded animals that may struggle to the bank. It is no easy task, according to Baron von Wrangell, who has been a witness of these scenes, to keep the frail craft afloat among the dense crowd of swimming deer, more especially as the males attack the boat with horns, teeth, and hind legs, while the females try to capsize it with their fore feet. Yet accidents rarely occur; and when, as often happens, the herd is rendered helpless by the antlers becoming entangled together, a good hunter may kill a hundred or more in less than half an hour. The spectacle on these occasions is indescribably wild and strange. "The throng of thousands of swimming reindeer, the sound

produced by the striking together of their antlers, the swift canoes dashing in among them, the terror of the frightened animals, the danger of the huntsmen, the shouts of warning advice or applause of their friends, the blood-stained water, and the surroundings of the scene, form a whole which none can picture to himself without having witnessed it."

With the nomad of the tundra the tame reindeer is, if possible, a more priceless possession than with the Lapp and Samoyede of the province of Archangel. Without its aid he could not support his wandering life over these lonely prairies and desert hills. While the snow lies on the ground, it bears him from place to place in his light sledge. In summer his whole care is to drive his herd where they will find fresh and abundant pasture. The milk of the reindeer is an important part of the food of his family; and its skin hangs at the entrance of his tent or is spread on his couch. The owner of the largest flock of reindeer would never dream of killing one for his subsistence, unless driven to the direst straits by famine. But often a Tungus or Tchuktchi loses his herd from disease, or a whole tribe are stripped of their wealth by their enemies, and then they have to settle down in some suitable locality for fishing and hunting, and give up their roving unfettered mode of life along with their dearly-prized "reins." They descend from the rank of "reindeer" to that of "dog" Tunguses or Tchuktchis; the shaggy wolf-like hound of these latitudes becoming the beast of burden on journeys and the domestic pet.

The custom of sledging with dogs is believed to be of comparatively recent growth in Northern Siberia, and is



supposed to have been borrowed from the Kamschadales. It is one of the marks of propinquity to the Eskimo tribes of North America, to whom the natives of the eastern extremity of Asiatic Russia approach more closely in physical type, habits, and dress the nearer we draw to Behring Strait and the Aleutian Archipelago, just as in the opposite direction the Samoyedes and Lapps gradually blend into the Finns and Norwegians, whom they adjoin to the westward. As we move eastward, therefore, through these dreary Arctic lands, not only do we pass into regions colder and more remote, but we proceed from semi-civilization to barbarism and to complete savagery, and from corrupted Christianity to absolute heathenism.

The native races dwelling on the shores of the Arctic Ocean are of different stocks, speak a variety of languages, and present many sharp points of contrast. But the stamp of the long Polar winter is upon them all. Ostiak, Voghul, Samoyede, Yakut, Yukahir, Tungus, Tchuktchi, Koriak, Lamut, and Kamschadale, all seem to have had their features blunted and cramped, and their very stature, like that of the dwarf willows and poplars of the tundra, contracted by the extreme cold. Exposure to a hot unsetting sun during the summer, alternating with confinement in their dark smoky wigwams during the months of winter, has probably given them their sallow complexion. The face, as a rule, is broad, with high cheek-bones and small black eyes. Their hair is black, coarse, straight, and scanty, and whiskers and beard are thin and often entirely wanting. Judging by their expressionless faces, one would say that the frost had benumbed their mental faculties; and no doubt the hard necessities of their life have made it almost im-

possible for them to rise above their present wretched condition.

But in their hunting and fishing expeditions they give token of extraordinary astuteness and readiness of resort, which is partly instinctive and partly acquired by long training. Though not so robust as the Russian, the Samoyede or Tchuktchi often displays a vigour and an activity which none would dream of, looking at his clumsy shape and diminutive stature. A favourite game among the latter tribe is the foot race; and visitors who have been present at their festivals tell of the competitors in these trials of speed, swaddled in clothes until they looked like round balls of fur, covering the ground with incredible ease and swiftness, and running a distance of seven or eight miles without showing signs of fatigue.

Within doors, only the lightest garments are worn; often the occupants of the hut go entirely naked, even when the temperature outside is such that they do not venture into the open air unless protected by the thickest furs. The smoke and filth and foul odours of these miserable dwellings are indescribable. Dirt among these people is supposed to be a protection against the cold; and it would be hard to say which of the Siberian tribes are most repulsively filthy in their habits. Yet the occupants of these fetid dens do not appear to suffer inconvenience or loss of health by breathing an atmosphere that would sicken and almost suffocate an inhabitant of Europe in half an hour; and children of the tenderest years are to be seen running out from the steaming hut and rolling in the snow in a temperature of forty or fifty degrees below zero, and showing no signs of having "caught cold." Doubtless, however,

many die from the sudden changes of climate and other hardships in their lot; and their contempt of sanitary laws is punished by the fearful epidemics that now and again sweep away thousands of these fast-dwindling races.

Only the strong and active are able to continue the struggle for existence; and the law of the "survival of the fittest" is carried out with extraordinary rigour. The stories told of the privations which an inhabitant of the tundra can support without showing signs of exhaustion sound almost fabulous. The Yakuts are known, even among the tribes of Northern Siberia, as "iron men." So thoroughly have they become inured to cold and exposure that their skins seem almost impervious to the icy blasts that would in a few minutes chill the inhabitant of a more temperate clime to the bone. When travelling from place to place, says Von Wrangell, "a Yakut wears only his usual indoor clothing, and at night spreads a horse-cloth on the snow, which, with a saddle for a pillow, forms the whole of his bedding; his only covering is the fur jacket which he has worn during the day, and which he pulls off and puts over his back and shoulders, while the front of his body has hardly any covering and is turned to the blazing fire. When he has lain for some time in this way, and feels so warm that he is nearly perspiring, he stops up his nose and ears with little bits of fur, and covers his face so as to leave an exceedingly small aperture for breathing; and this is all that he requires in the most intense cold not to be frozen during sleep. I have seen Yakuts in the severe cold of this country, and when the fire had long been extinguished, and the light jacket had slipped off their

shoulders, sleeping quietly, completely exposed to the heavens, with scarcely any clothing on, and their bodies covered with a thick coat of rime."

As an instance of the extraordinary keenness of vision possessed by this people, M. von Anjou relates that during his explorations in the neighbourhood of the Lena and Indigirka rivers in 1822, a middle-aged Yakut assured him, pointing to the planet Jupiter, that he had several times seen that blue star swallow up another very small star and afterwards send it forth again. Doubtful as it may appear that a Siberian can perceive with the naked eye the movements of Jupiter's satellites, which are only made visible to others through a powerful telescope, it is certain that their acuteness of sight and their retentiveness of memory enable them to ascertain their whereabouts and accurately guide a way through the most featureless wastes; and this power of vision also makes credible the statement that the islands lying to the north of Siberia were known by sight to the inhabitants of the mainland long before they were visited by civilized discoverers.

The Siberian tribes are either remnants of races the main bodies of which have moved southward and westward to more favoured climes, or the fragments of people who have been driven northward and eastward—forced "out into the cold" by the pressure of more powerful and warlike nations. It would be hard to say which of these experiences has been the fate of the Yakuts, their history consisting only of a few misty traditions; and Latham's profound conjecture that "there was, some time or other, some one on the parts about the Lena who called some one Yakut," does not help us much,

however far it may be regarded as confirming his other impression, that the Tungus derive their name from "donki," meaning "a man."

The Yakut language proves them to be a people of Turkish race; and they are the most northerly branch of that widely-spread stem, being scattered over a vast extent of territory, from the eastern tributaries of the Yenisei to the neighbourhood of the Kolima, and from the Polar Sea to the upper streams of the Lena. It is chiefly on the latter river, however, that they are settled. They are a pastoral people, but are seldom, properly speaking, nomads. Some of them indeed are remarkably well-to-do, possessing large flocks of cattle and horses, and the most highly-developed society could not show themselves more fond of money or more litigious. Cattle-rearing and horse-breeding are varied by fur-trapping, fishing, and indulgence in the excitement of the chase. Their habitations are of two kinds—one for the summer weather, and the other suited for winter use. The former is called the *uross*, and is a light circular tent formed of poles covered with strips of birch bark, softened by boiling, and sewn together, with the bright silvery skin outside. These can be taken down and moved from place to place as the tribe shifts in search of better pasturage, fishing, and hunting; but on the approach of winter each family returns to the shelter of its *yurta*, or permanent dwelling—a log-built, pyramid-shaped cabin, thickly covered outside with branches, grass, and mud, with a small aperture for the admission of light. Formerly these windows were closed by plates of ice, but these have gradually been giving way to sheets of oiled paper or fish membrane; and such has been the

march of progress among the Yakuts that *yurtas* may now be found which possess the luxury of glass.

In other respects the Yakuts are beginning to imitate the example of their more civilized Russian masters. Fish, horseflesh, larchbark broth, sour cow's milk, mare's milk, and "Yakut butter"—a kind of cheese or curd with a sourish taste—are still the main articles of diet; fat, in the solid or liquid form, and fresh or rancid, is their great delicacy; and *kumyss*, or fermented mare's milk, still forms their chief beverage, and is drunk literally by the pailful. But a taste for less coarse viands, and especially for bread, is beginning to spread; and there is a likelihood that a part of the Yakut nation will settle down as cultivators of the soil.

To the west and north-west of the Yakut country, on the lower parts of the Obi and Yenisei, and along the coasts of the Kara Sea and the Polar Ocean as far as the Khatanga River, is the wide area over which are thinly sprinkled Samoyede tribes, and kindred Ostiaks, Voghuls, Youraks, and other races of Finnish origin. Some description of the appearance and ways of life of the Samoyedes in the government of Archangel has been given in a previous chapter. The Siberian branches of the race differ only from those of Europe in being perhaps a few degrees more barbarous, ignorant, and wretched. Like their kinsmen west of the Urals, the Samoyedes of the Obi and Yenisei are keepers of reindeer. Carrying with them their light tents of skin, they range during the season over an enormous extent of ground; and Captain Markham in 1879 found a number of families who had wintered in Novaya Zemlia.

The Ostiaks are for the most part a fisher folk, taller in

stature and a step higher in civilization than the dwarfish Samoyedes. Like the Yakuts, they have summer and winter cabins—the former of birch-bark and the latter of timber. Their district lies partly within the region of forest; and when the frost has bound up the rivers, and the first snows have fallen, the Ostiak trappers make long excursions on snow-shoes in search of fox, sable, and squirrel, the pelts of which they know well how to barter at a good figure in the markets of Berezov and other fur emporiums. The Voghuls dwell wholly within the limits of the deep woods, and they are almost to a man foresters, fur-trappers, and hunters. Their little villages consist of six or seven cabins, huddled close together on the bank of some stream that flows for scores of miles under the shadow of the sombre pine-branches before the next scanty signs of human occupation are met with. In the hunting season, the owners of these huts are seldom to be found at home. They are far away on solitary journeys scouring the wooded and boggy wildernesses around them, with gun or bow on shoulder, looking for the tracks of elk, reindeer, and bear, or visiting the traps they have baited for the marten and silver fox.

The time will no doubt come when these magnificent forests, which stretch in a broad belt across the whole length of Siberia, and follow the valleys of the rivers and the southern slopes of the mountain ranges almost to the borders of the Icy Sea, will no longer stand cumbering the ground, useful only as hunting-grounds for a few thousands of half-savage fur-trappers. The fine timber of these woods is a rich and undeveloped source of wealth, which will be turned to account as soon as

sea communication has been fairly established between Western Europe and the Gulf of Obi.

In the meantime these almost impenetrable masses of forest are neither cheerful to the view nor favourable to the progress of the traveller longing to reach the end of one of the long Siberian stages. Nordenskiöld, in his voyage up the Yenisei, saw rich prairies and hillsides covered with bright green turf and interspersed with clumps and thickets, giving the country the aspect of a beautiful park, carefully kept and watered; and then suddenly the prospect would be darkened by the ancient forest leaning over the river-bank, and stretching away without break or limit that the eye could discover. "The forest," he says, "consisted mainly of pines already, from a point north of the Polar Circle, often of the most colossal dimensions, but in such cases many times gray and half<sup>d</sup> withered with age. Between these the ground was so covered with fallen branching stems, some of them fresh, others half rotten or wholly changed into mould, held together only by the bark, that one could only force a way with difficulty, and with the danger of breaking his legs in the thicket of logs. Besides, the fallen stems were everywhere covered, many times even concealed, by an uncommonly luxuriant moss vegetation, while lichens occurred only very sparingly, in consequence of which the pines wanted the shaggy covering common in Sweden, and the bark of the birches, which were visible here and there among the pines, had an uncommon blinding whiteness. When one goes into this unvaried forest a little way from the river, he ought to see that he has a correct knowledge of the points of the compass; a mistake here might carry him in a direction where for a hundred,



perhaps two hundred leagues, there is no chance of meeting with an inhabited place."

The tribes from the Urals to the Lena, whether Yakut shepherds or Ostiak fishers, Samoyedes of the tundra or Voghuls of the forest, are officially supposed to be converted to Christianity; and churches have been built and priests appointed to retain these wandering and scattered flocks in the fold. It would be rash to say that they are less superstitious now than in the days of undiluted paganism. A furtive worship is paid to the old deities, even where the saint days and church fasts are most rigidly observed; and stories are even told of priests getting themselves "doctored" by a native magician before daring to set out on a journey. Still the new faith is no doubt slowly exerting a beneficial influence on the morals and manners of the races brought in contact with it.

In the parts beyond the Lena, however, and throughout that enormous territory bordering on the Pacific, and known as the Maritime Province, the Greek Orthodox Church has scarcely even a nominal hold on the beliefs of the native races. At the *simovies* or winter residences of the Cossack and Russian traders dotted along the courses of the rivers and the sea-coast, in the *ostrogs*, or military posts for the collection of tribute and preservation of order, or around the penal settlements that are sprinkled over the savage wastes of Eastern Siberia, a devout profession of Christianity is made. The harbours on the Pacific shore—the line of naval stations, trading-ports, and places of call for whaling-ships, which extends from Petropaulovsk in Kamschatka to Vladivostock on the frontier of Corea—boast not only of hand-

some churches, but of club-houses, promenades, and other appurtenances of civilization, and look hopefully forward to the time when they will rival in wealth and energy the commercial cities of California, Oregon, and British Columbia. But the indigenous peoples cling to their ancient Shamanist faith, and prefer the unfettered life of their ancestors, the privilege of roving at will over their wilderness of bog, rock, and forest, to being "improved out of existence."

Shamanism is one of the most primitive forms of religious belief, and its rites are probably not greatly changed from those practised by the wild forefathers of the Western nations before they left their original homes, before the influence of Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and other more highly organized creeds, had begun to penetrate into Central and Northern Asia. It possesses almost no abstract ideas or dogmas, and boasts of few outward symbols of worship in the shape of idols, altars, or temples. It might be resolved into a belief in magic—in the malign influence of demons that must be propitiated or baffled by wild dancings, grimacings, drumming, and conjuring; an art only known to the initiated priests or shamans,\* to whom resort is made before any important action is taken, or when misfortune has befallen an individual or a tribe.

Nothing can exceed the frenzied gestures of these professors of the black art as they wrestle with the powers of darkness. The shamans are only admitted into the order after long vigils and painful ordeals; and by the common herd they are looked upon with profound awe, as something more than men, and partaking of the powers and attributes of the mysterious spirits with whom they

are in communication. Many of them, no doubt, are self-conscious impostors, who maintain the ascendancy over their dupes by the practice of tricks of jugglery and impudent lying. This, however, does not explain the full influence or behaviour of the shamans. They are deceived as well as deceivers. The harsh and gloomy aspects of nature with which they are familiar, and the melancholy music of the great lonely rivers rushing between their "palisades of pine-trees," have darkened their imaginations. The cruel needs and sufferings of their daily life have impressed on them the idea that the malevolent powers have the ruling of the world; and their fasts, their midnight incantations, and the use of narcotics and stimulants, keep their nerves strung to a pitch of excitement akin to madness, in which they are subject to the wildest delusions and most extravagant actions. "Whenever I have seen them operate," says M. de Matiuschkin, "they have left me with a long-continued and gloomy impression. The wild look, the blood-shot eyes, the labouring breath, the convulsive utterance, the seemingly involuntary distortion of the face and the whole body, the streaming hair, even the hollow sound of the magic drum, all contributed to the effect; and I can well understand that the whole would appear to the uncivilized spectator as the work of evil spirits."

The Shamanist tribes that wander over the wastes of Eastern Siberia belong mostly to the Tungus race—a family of peoples closely allied to the Mongols. They occupy an enormous range of country—from the Great Wall of China to Behring Strait, and westward to the neighbourhood of the Yenisei; but except the Mantchus

are to be accounted as part of this stem, they are nowhere formidable in numbers or power. In Siberia they can hardly be said to have a settled home. Their occupation varies with the locality in which they are placed. The Lamuts of the Sea of Okotsk are fishers, and the Tchuktchis near the East Cape carry on an active transit trade in furs and European articles with the inhabitants of the North American continent. The Tungus proper are divided, according to the districts they occupy, and their favourite draught animals, into the “horse,” the “reindeer,” and the “dog” sections. But everywhere they are a roving race, wandering sometimes in large companies, and sometimes in single families, and extracting more pleasure from their existence than in the circumstances seems possible. Indeed, travellers have spoken of the nomadizing Tungus, and of the Yukahir, an allied tribe lying farther to the northward, now sadly reduced by disease and wars with the Tchuktchis, as among the most contented, careless, and happy set of people they ever met.

The great mass of territory east of the Lena which these races scour on their hunting excursions or in their search for forage differs greatly from the tundra lands in the possession of the Yakuts and Samoyedes. A long mountain chain—the Stanovoi range—thrown off from the Altai traverses the country to the neighbourhood of Behring Strait. The region has been very imperfectly explored, and a scientific expedition recently discovered that part, at least, of a range of mountains known as the Yablonoi had no existence, its place being occupied by a tableland of moderate elevation.

The general features of Eastern Siberia are known to

be in strong contrast to those of the western plains. Almost everywhere it is broken and intersected by hilly ridges. There are, of course, extensive morasses and level wastes of stones and sand, but at intervals, on the water-sheds between the main streams flowing to the Polar Ocean or the Pacific, the steep slopes of the subsidiary ranges of the Stanovoi Kherbet have to be ascended—the summits in some places covered with snow all the year round. The most notable of these perhaps is the Verkhoiansk Mountains, which separate the valley of the Lena from that of the Iana, and mark the farthest limit of the fir-tree, and where, according to meteorologists, is found the "North Pole of cold" in the Old World. The southern sides of these ranges are generally thickly covered with forest and brushwood, while the other slopes, swept by the icy blasts from the north, are bare, and the courses of the streams flowing between the rocky ridges are bordered by deep marshes.

In these rough places sledging is often impracticable, and the journey is made on horseback. The actual suffering endured on these stages, says a traveller (Baron von Wrangell) well qualified to bear testimony, is such as cannot be imagined by those who have not experienced it. Covered from head to foot in stiff and cumbrous furs weighing thirty or forty pounds, one cannot move; and under the thick fur hood, fastened to the bear-skin collar, and covering the whole face, a little of the external air can only be drawn in, as it were, by stealth, and so keenly cold is the atmosphere that it causes a peculiar and painful sensation to the throat and lungs. The distances from one halting-place to the next occupy about ten hours, and all this time the traveller must continue

on horseback, as it is impossible, in his heavy, cumbrous dress, to wade through the snow. The horses suffer as much as the riders, for, in addition to the general effects of the cold, they are tormented by ice forming in their nostrils and stopping their breathing. When they indicate this by a distressed snort and a convulsive shaking of their head, the drivers relieve them by taking out the pieces of ice to save them from being suffocated. When the icy ground is not covered with snow, their hoofs often burst from the effect of the cold. The caravan is always surrounded by a thick cloud of vapour. It is not only living bodies that produce this effect; even the snow smokes! These evaporations are instantly changed into millions of needles of ice, which fill the air, and cause a constant slight noise resembling the sound of tearing satin or thick silk. Even the reindeer seeks the forest to protect himself from the intensity of the cold. In the tundra, where there is no shelter to be found, the whole herd crowd together as closely as possible to gain a little warmth from each other, and may be seen standing thus quite motionless. Only the dark bird of winter—the raven—still cleaves the icy air with slow and heavy wing, leaving behind him a long line of thin vapour marking the track of his solitary flight. The influence of the cold extends even to inanimate nature. The thickest trunks of trees are rent asunder with a loud sound, which in these deserts falls on the ear like a signal-gun at sea; large masses of rock are torn from their ancient sites; the ground in the tundras and in the rocky valleys cracks and forms wide yawning fissures, from which the waters that were beneath the surface rise, giving off a cloud of vapour,

and become immediately changed into ice. The effect of this degree of cold extends even beyond the earth: the beauty of the deep-blue Polar sky, so often and so justly praised, disappears in the dense atmosphere which the intensity of cold produces; the stars still glisten in the firmament, but their brilliancy is dimmed.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE PACIFIC SHORES.

**B**EYOND the Kolima and Anadir rivers is a region more desolate and savage than any we have yet visited. The peninsula which stretches in a series of hilly ridges towards Behring Strait, where it is separated by only fifty miles of sea from the American continent, is the most remote corner of the Russian Empire, and it is the nook where the Czar's authority is the weakest. In Siberia, at least, the rule does not hold good that "distance lends enchantment to the view." Russian and Cossack settlers are sparsely scattered in the Tungus country, but in the land of the Tchuktchis they scarcely venture to come at all.

The Tchuktchis have been able to maintain themselves in practical independence; the Autocrat of Russia claims that the land is his, but he cannot, except at the cost of a military expedition, collect the tribute of the natives. This redoubtable people are, for the most part, left unmolested by their nominal masters, and neither party, perhaps, has cause to regret the arrangement that keeps them separate. In the Tchuktchi Peninsula the conditions of the Siberian climate reach the maximum of severity. Partly from the more northerly position of



the territory and the high elevation of the surface, and partly from its position between two ice-encumbered seas, the winters are longer and colder, and the summers shorter and more interrupted by violent snow and sand storms and thick cold fogs, than elsewhere. Hardly a month of decently mild weather can be counted upon in the year. "Before the 20th of July," says Billings, "there is no symptom of summer; and on the 20th of August winter sets in again." In 1879 the snow covered the ground till the beginning of July; and on the 16th of that month a heavily-laden sledge passed over the ice from the frozen-in *Vega* to the shore. What roots and berries the niggard soil yields are used as food, and the natives, as Nordenskiöld mentions, are fain to use "the green spinach-like contents found in the paunch of the newly-killed reindeer" in lieu of vegetable food.

The Tchuktchis, notwithstanding, are a vigorous people, both in bodily frame and in intellect. Very different estimates have been formed of them by the travellers and voyagers who have visited their encampments. Burney, who accompanied Captain Cook when he anchored off the Tchuktchi country in 1778, considered them "as fine a natural sample of mankind as any on the globe." Cook himself found them civil and obliging, and noticed that their weapons and articles of dress displayed a degree of ingenuity and beauty "surpassing what one might expect in so northern a people." The Russians, and their immediate neighbours the Koriaks and Yukahirs, with whom they were often engaged in desultory warfare, naturally viewed them in quite a different light, regarding them as a folk incorrigible, ferocious, and obstinately rebellious. "They are bad

and dangerous," says a writer of a century ago ; "savage, coarse, proud, refractory, thievish, false, and revengeful." But this people seem to have lost their evil qualities along with their martial spirit. The crew of the *Vega*, from whose experiences we have the latest impressions of the Tchuktchis, found them anything but unfriendly. They were the first natives that had been met with in coasting the whole northern shore of Siberia, and during the long winter which the Swedes spent when frozen in so near to their goal in Behring Strait, the tribe were very helpful and attentive in supplying the voyagers with game and fish. The Tchuktchi country seems to be the true home of "liberty, equality, and fraternity." None among them was of more authority than his neighbours ; yet among this "literally anarchic and godless crew" there was shown "the greatest possible hospitality and kindness," both towards the strangers and each other.

Traces of the neighbourhood of America, and of the visits of the United States whalers who hunt the fur-seal in these seas, were observable in the furnishings of their tents and their ornaments and weapons. In one tent a large cast-iron was observed hanging over the fire ; and the needles, knives, axes, bright-coloured linen and woollen shirts, and other articles of foreign manufacture found among them, had all come from American sources. So also had the brandy and tobacco, of which the tribe are inordinately fond. While not a Russian word was spoken, a boy was found who could count correctly up to ten in English. The Tchuktchi country, as has been hinted, has from time immemorial been a place of barter for the products of the lands lying to the east of Behring

Strait. Many of the finest beaver and otter skins that reach the markets of Irbit or Kiachta, and are thence forwarded to Europe or China, have been trapped in the neighbourhood of the Yukon or other Alaskan rivers, and passed on to the Tchuktchis, and thence from hand to hand across the measureless deserts of Eastern Siberia. The island of Ilir, in Behring Strait, is the spot where the Tchuktchis and the Eskimos of North-west America exchange their wares; but even this is only an intermediate station, for, according to the Russian traveller Dittmar, a beaver skin is sometimes exchanged for a single leaf of tobacco—brought, perhaps, from the Caucasus—at the most remote markets in Polar America. But this traffic will probably be diverted into other channels by the purchase of Russian America—a territory of nearly six hundred thousand square miles—by the United States.

These sea trips are made in *baidars*—boats of whale or seal skin stretched on a frame, strongly resembling the skiffs used by the Greenland and other tribes of Eskimos. In another direction visits have, it is believed, been made by this people to Polar lands lying to the northward of the Tchuktchi Peninsula, and the existence of which was first known through the researches of Kellett and Long. On charts of the world, on Mercator's Projection, this hyperborean country has, as Wrangell Land or Kellett Land, made an imposing appearance, stretching, a great undefined blotch, from the neighbourhood of the Siberian coast almost to the Pole. In point of fact nothing was known of it beyond the report that its highlands had been sighted on the horizon by the enterprising voyagers who had penetrated into

these icy seas. It was believed that it would be found to have inhabitants; that the lost tribes of Tchuwanzes and Omoki, that had been driven from the mainland by the warlike Tchuktchis, had found an asylum on this remote shore; and that here was the original home of the musk-ox.

Recent Arctic expeditions have dissipated these fanciful notions. The exploring ship *Jeannette*, sent out to explore this part of the Arctic regions by the *New York Herald* in the autumn of 1879, was caught in the ice of the Polar Sea, and after drifting with the pack for two seasons, and passing several desolate Arctic islands, was nipped in the summer of 1881 to the northeast of New Siberia. Her crew, abandoning her in three boats, made for the mouths of the Lena, which, after many weeks of terrible sufferings, two of the boats' companies reached in safety; only, however, to lose themselves—in the case of some hopelessly and finally—in the waste tundra.

Meanwhile relief expeditions had been sent from the Pacific, who landed on Wrangell Land, and even proclaimed it United States territory. It is no great Arctic continent and pathway to the Pole, only a barren island of moderate size. It has no inhabitants of greater consequence than the white bears.

On the Anadir river and in the peninsula of Kamschatka we come among races—the Koriaks and the Kamschadales—who are thought to approach even closer than the Tchuktchis to the Greenlanders in habits and appearance, and even in language. The long string of islands that stretch in a semicircle between the peninsulas of Alaska and Kamschatka has probably served as

a "train" by which Eskimo blood and customs have been conveyed from America to Asia. With Alaska itself this Aleutian archipelago has now passed over to the great American Republic, which may possibly discover some means of turning them to better purpose than Russia has done. Dreary and ghostly islands these appear in the records of the voyagers who have dropped anchor off their rocky shores, or passed them on the way northward to Behring Strait, shrouded generally in thick mists that hid or distorted their outlines, and looking like

"The haunt of seals and orcs, and sea-mews' clang,"

but not spots that human beings would choose for their residence.

A scanty population, however, does occupy the larger islands of this chill, foggy archipelago; and the group is well stocked with fur animals and visited by myriads of clamorous sea-fowl, and herds of seal and walrus, whose skins and flesh supply the natives with clothing and food. Many of the islands are uninhabited, and this is also the case with an island named after the discoverer of the group lying detached from the Aleutian chain, near the coast of Kamschatka. It was at Behring Island that the bold Danish navigator, sent out by Peter the Great to emulate the Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, and English seamen in their renown as discoverers of new lands, was wrecked on his second voyage, after he had visited the strait that separates Asia from America, and with the greater part of his crew perished miserably of cold and hunger. A sandy hollow in the barren rock was all the shelter that the explorer

had in his last moments from the cold damp mists and piercing northern gales. He may be said to have been buried alive, for when the sides of the pit fell in and covered the lower part of the body, he prayed his men not to remove the sand, as it helped to preserve warmth; and so, as if he had been some gallant ship hopelessly stranded on a quicksand, the loose soil "silted" around and engulfed him almost before his dying eyes closed on the wild sky and stormy sea which he had been among the first to brave.

A monument to Behring has been erected at Petropaulovsk, the chief Russian settlement in the peninsula of Kamschatka, and near it is a memorial of another great navigator, the French La Pérouse, who traced the shores of the Gulf of Tartary and the adjacent islands, and afterwards, with his men, met a lonely and mysterious death on an island in the wide Pacific.

At Petropaulovsk, too, is buried Captain Clarke, the companion of Cook in his last voyage of discovery. Petropaulovsk has lost much of its importance since the chief naval station of Russia in the Pacific was removed to the mouth of the Amoor. It has still, however, some three thousand inhabitants, which, in Eastern Siberia, raises it to the rank of a great centre of population. It was founded by the Cossacks in 1740, and first bore the name of Avatcha, from the stream that here falls into the bay. The chief event in its annals is the ill-advised attempt of the French and British squadrons to demolish the fortress during the Crimean War. The inhabitants are naturally proud of having foiled the attack of the two great sea Powers, and it is their custom, on the anniversary of the engagement, to march

in procession "round the town and over the hill from which the storming party were thrown, chanting hymns of joy and praise for the victory." The Bay of Avatcha is a magnificent sheet of water, capable, it is said, of accommodating the united fleets of all the nations of the world. It is surrounded by grand and lofty mountain outlines, while a rich belt of luxuriant vegetation skirts the bay, struggles up the branching valleys, and surrounds the red-roofed log cabins of the village.

Petropaulovsk is in latitude only a little distance north of London, and the peninsula of Kamschatka lies within much the same degrees of latitude as the British Islands, while its area is pretty nearly the same as that of England and Scotland. On the other hand, its population—native and Russian—has been put down, on the most liberal estimate, at some twenty thousand souls, or one for each four square miles of territory. Early last century, it is believed, the number of Koriaks and Kamschadales inhabiting the peninsula was not short of one hundred thousand. Long and bloody quarrels with the Russians and with each other, and the diseases and vices introduced along with Cossack civilization, have thinned away these people till barely a twentieth of their number remain; and these are not in a much higher condition, morally or physically, than when, in 1650, the vessel of the Cossack Alexeief, Deshnef's companion in the celebrated voyage from the mouth of the Kolima round the East Cape to the mouth of the Anadir, was cast ashore on this inhospitable coast, and the unfortunate crew were massacred by the dwellers on the Kamschatka river.

Of late years the miserable remnant of these races

have mainly supported themselves by fishing, though some of them possess reindeer, and engage in fur-hunting, disposing the skins to the Russian agents at Petropaulovsk, Nishni Kamschatka, and Penjinsk. As in habits and manner of life they differ only for the worse from other Siberian tribes already described, we may be excused from penetrating into the interior of their half subterranean wigwams, and pursuing too curious inquiries into their domestic arrangements, in an atmosphere so highly impregnated with smoke and the odour of train-oil.

Kamschatka, in the opinion of many of the travellers who have paid it a flying visit, is fitted to support a much larger population than it now possesses. There are many sheltered places along its coasts where there are a fine growth of forest trees, and meadows rank with nourishing grasses. The valley of Kamschatka river, in its upper portion especially, contains a large extent of fertile land, and crops of barley, rye, and oats, with the potato and several hardy species of vegetables, have been raised.

These visitors have for the most part, however, only seen the peninsula during the warm period of the year, when for a brief space it dons a summer dress. Were they compelled to pass a few consecutive winters in Kamschatka, and personally make the experiment of growing corn on a soil where, in addition to the shortness of the summer, blights, frosts, and vermin combine to make the chance of reaping a harvest very problematical, they would probably see cause to change their minds as to the resources of the country.

There is no room, however, for difference of opinion as to the scenery, which vies in grandeur with that



of the Caucasus, and has some elements of stern sublimity which can hardly be paralleled in any other part of the world. The peninsula is traversed throughout its whole length by a range of lofty volcanic mountains, which gradually diminish in height towards the north, until they merge into the bare and dreary steppes between the Anadir and Penjinsk rivers, and join the long Stanovoi chain and the main mountain system of Eastern Siberia. In the south, the summits of the range vie in height with the most elevated peaks of the Swiss Alps, and embrace no fewer than twenty-one volcanic cones, mostly active. A short distance north of Petropaulovsk the main range throws off a branch towards the north-east, which encloses the southern side of the basin of the Kamschatka river; and it is in this short subsidiary chain that the grandest and loftiest summits of the Kamschatkan Alps occur, including several volcanoes, and culminating in the smoke-capped cone of Kliuchevsk, 15,762 feet high, over against which, guarding the northern side of the valley of the Kamschatka river, is the rival volcanic peak of Shivelutch. No member of the Alpine Club has yet bethought himself of scaling the shining sides of these giants; and it will be long before a "Cook's tourist" can gaze, from the blackened fields of scorix scattered round the mouths of the craters where frost and fire maintain their drawn battle, on the vast and lonely prospect spread beneath. The interior of the peninsula, indeed, is an almost unexplored wonderland of snow-fields, glaciers, and lava-beds, sloping down to the deeply-trenched gorges where cataracts gleam in the shade of the pine forests, or to deep fiords overhung by precipices.

It is on the eastern side that the coast has this bold, deeply indented character. On the west, towards the shallow Sea of Okotsk, the mountains are farther from the shore, which is much more tame and level. From the southern extremity—Cape Lopatka—the Kurile Islands stretch in a bold sweep towards Japan, like a barrier separating these inland waters from the Pacific.

The Kuriles, like the Aleutian group, have lately passed from the possession of the Czar to another power, having been ceded to Japan in exchange for the Mikado's claims to the island of Sagalien. No great sacrifice was implied in this relinquishment, for the islands, notwithstanding that they are in the latitude of France, are dismally cold, damp, and dreary. The Kuro Siwo—the "Black Stream," or equatorial current that washes the shores of Japan, bestowing on that country its mild summer and autumn climate—is deflected eastward by the coast of Yesso, and the more northern lands derive little benefit from the warmth which it carries from the tropics.

On the other hand, meeting with the cold Polar stream flowing southward, those raw sea-fogs are raised which wrap about the Kurile Islands like a wet blanket for a great part of the year, and the coasts are beset by drift-ice so late in the season as June. The group is subject to earthquake shocks and other plutonic disturbances, and marks the line of that volcanic belt which, starting from the Philippine Islands, passes through Japan, Kamschatka, and the Aleutian Islands to the shores of America. A little to the eastward of the Kuriles, and in the track of the "Kuro Siwo," the bed of the Pacific sinks to a profound depth, and the

deepest ocean sounding—five and a quarter English miles—has been registered not far from Iturup, one of the most southerly of the archipelago.

Barren as those islands are, or covered with a dense scrub of dwarf oak and birch, giving shelter only to foxes, wolves, bears, and some species of marten, the seas around them are extraordinarily rich in life, and the shoals of herring and other fish attract innumerable flocks of birds of different species, including the great white-tailed sea-eagle, whose nests Captain St. John found in the stunted fir-trees of Kunashir, the island nearest to Yesso.

The region, however, boasts a more rare and curious specimen of natural history in the aboriginal human inhabitants—the Ainos. Regarding this strange race we have recently had the testimony of two clever and charming writers on Japan—Miss Bird and Captain St. John—who paint on the whole a favourable picture of these poor “hairy people.” Originally, there is reason to suppose, possessors of the whole Japanese archipelago, since the invasion of the present Mongolian inhabitants of Japan they have been pushed northward, until now they count only a few scattered thousands, sheltering themselves in the virgin forests of Yesso and Sagalien, or in the swampy islands of the Kurile group, whence no one has hitherto thought it worth while to eject them.

The Aino is not very strong either in physique or intellect, but he is generally a gentle, inoffensive kind of creature, extremely anxious to keep out of sight of the world if the world will but let him alone. The average height of the men is not much over five feet, and they are of spare, light make, with copper-coloured skins, rather

regular and expressive features having nothing of the high-cheek-boned Mongol type, and large dark eyes, in which Miss Bird was able to read a world of melancholy meaning. Their great peculiarity, however, is their hair, which is black, long, and in great profusion, the men having beards and moustaches flowing to their breasts, and the women great masses of hair flung back on their necks and shoulders like manes. "The entire body," says Captain St. John, "is entirely covered with hair, very frequently to an extraordinary degree. The children are also hairy little things." Great as is this people's "capacity for sorrow"—stimulated, perhaps, by their history and their neighbourhood to a peculiarly melancholy ocean—they are easily pleased, and kindly disposed and obliging towards strangers, though their hospitality might be more appreciated if they were more cleanly in their habits, and if it were not the custom—at least in Sagalien—to preserve at home the body of any notable man for a whole year after death, the widow having the privilege of daily washing the remains, and lying under the penalty of being herself killed if she fails to *cure* her lord properly by the end of the twelve months.

In a few generations, probably, this "mild-eyed, melancholy" race will be extinct. Owing to the hard, exposed life they lead, few survive to the age of fifty; and the Japanese speak of them as an order of inferior beings, and work them as slaves. The Ainos, for their part, accept the situation with perfect good faith; and as their proud masters will not own brotherhood with the hairy race, they fraternize with the shaggy brown bears of their forests, numbers of which,

while cubs, are kept as pets in their houses, and are even suckled by the women. Captain St. John was much struck by the polite manner in which one of those aborigines did the honours of his hut, and the Englishman's dog was still more astonished on being also greeted with a profound obeisance, and formally asked, as a distinguished guest, to partake of some dried flesh.

In Sagalien the arrival of Russian convict settlers of the worst class and their military guard is a further warning that the time of the Ainos is short on the earth. Hopes are entertained that the soil and climate of this attenuated island will be found suited to the growth of barley and other cereals, and it is also known to contain coal and other mineral riches. Possibly something may be made of Sagalien, which has hitherto been slightly regarded as a piece of useless lumber; but its harbourless coasts, enveloped by the cold Polar current from Behring Sea, its central mountains covered nearly all the year round with snow, and its dense swamp forests, do not hold out very enticing prospects to the intending agriculturist or trader.

The preciousness of Sagalien in the eyes of the Russians, however, does not lie so much in its coal-beds, its promise of future harvests, its uses as a penal colony, or its six hundred miles of length, but in its situation commanding the northern entrances to the Sea of Japan, and guarding, like a huge breakwater, the mouth of the great river Amoor. The position of Russia on the Pacific has been industriously strengthened of late years; and the politicians who believe they can see farther into a millstone than others, think they have detected designs on the part of the great Northern Power of crushing Japan,

appropriating Corea, dominating China, and striking a deadly blow at British commerce in these Eastern seas, if not of snatching at our colonies in Australia and the South Seas and our Indian Empire.

It has been mentioned how Russia, by the year 1861, had completed the "consolidation" of her conquests on the Amoor, and acquired a long strip of coast territory south of the river, projecting southward in the direction where, according to the wisdom of the Russophobists, she means her armies to march. This has been incorporated in Primorsk—the Coast Province—a territory which, from Behring Strait to the Corean frontier, has the inconvenient length of two thousand three hundred miles, while in places it is only thirty miles in breadth.

The seat of the governor of Primorsk was removed from Petropaulovsk to Nikolaevsk, on the northern bank of the Amoor, near its mouth, where a little town of four thousand or five thousand inhabitants has rapidly sprung up. Nikolaevsk makes a rather imposing show from the river—here a mile in width—with its wharves, its churches, and military barracks, its wide streets, sparsely lined with bright-painted timber houses, and public "garden," where a band occasionally discourses music to the fashionable world of the little capital, all set against a dark background of forest.

Along the coast of Lower Primorsk, south of the Amoor, are a number of magnificent harbours, and Vladivostock, near the extreme southern point, is one of the chief stations of the Russian Pacific fleet. This thin-drawn slip of territory, in fact, is regarded as the extreme outside filament of the great complicated web of the "Eastern Question," and needing therefore to be

watched with peculiar care. The utility to Russia, however, of the fine bays which she has acquired in the Gulf of Tartary and the Japan Sea is materially injured by the circumstance that they are all closed by ice during the winter and spring. Vladivostock itself, in nearly the same latitude as Rome, is blocked by ice up till the beginning of April ; and it is the singular fate of Russia that in all her enormous coast-line in Europe and Asia she has no port that is open all the year round. Hence the anxiety, with which she is credited by her watchful censors, to move a single step farther southward and seize upon Corea with its fine ice-free harbours and command of the Yellow Sea.

Apart from these vague possibilities, the district has resources and attractions which can be immediately turned to account. It is a hilly country, finely wooded, for the most part, with groves of oak, elm, walnut, and maple, disposed in such a way as to give the scenery near Vladivostock quite an English aspect. A few tribes of Mantchus were formerly its only occupants, but Russian and German colonists are beginning to settle in the country. In the hills and woods fine sport can be had after deer and bear, and for those who fly at still nobler game there is the Mongolian tiger. The streams are abundantly stocked ; indeed the quantity of salmon and other fish that ascend the rivers flowing into this part of the Pacific is almost fabulous. In a single river in Yesso, for example, six thousand tons of salmon are caught and salted every year during the few weeks of the fishing season ; and the fishers declare that when the first rush over the bar at high tide takes place, the backs of the salmon are visible, and the water

rises along the banks! So, on the Amoor, the salmon and sturgeon come in from the great deep in such myriads that they seem to form almost a solid mass as they ascend the stream.

But we have already anticipated these lordly swimmers, who are on their way to the upper course of the great river, and have completed, in a fragmentary way, the wide circuit of Siberia.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

### RUSSIAN TURKESTAN.



THE political and the geographical boundaries of Russian Turkestan are by no means identical. In the official sense its borders are reached when, leaving the half-Tartar town of Semipalatinsk—the “Seven Palaces”—we cross the range of hills forming the watershed of the streams that drain into the Upper Irtish, and descend into the basin of Lake Balkash and the province of Semiretchensk—called after the “seven rivers” which find their way by the main channel of the Ili into that great inland sea.

Balkash is a typical lake of the steppes. It is three hundred and thirty miles in length, and at one point sixty miles in breadth. But there is hardly a permanent human habitation on its shores. It is hemmed in either by hungry deserts of sand or salt marshes. No river flows into it on the northern side, which is formed of sandy terraces rising one above another to the level of the steppes, which are the pasturing grounds of the Middle Horde of the Kirghiz. On the south the water shoals so gradually that it is impossible to tell where lake ends and dry land begins; and in these swamps the rivers that flow down from the Ala Tau and other spurs

of the Altai mountains lose themselves after wandering disconsolately through a dreary desert thinly sprinkled with saline vegetation. The Ili is the only river that brings down any considerable body of water to the lake, which must at one time have been of much larger dimensions than at present, and is even being slowly dried up, the bays along its margin being changed into lagoons, and then filled up with the sand drifted by the winds from the surrounding waste.

The Russian Government have placed vessels on the lake, which ascend the Ili, on the fertile banks of which the population of the district is mainly congregated. Kopal, on the outermost skirts of the Ala Tau range, here rising to a height of 14,000 to 17,000 feet, north of the valley, was at one time the place of chief note in this province; but since the seat of authority has been fixed at Vierny, on a little stream falling into the Ili, the latter town has in great measure supplanted it. Vierny, under the administration of its active and able governor General Kolpakofsky—surnamed by his admiring men, for his tirelessness in the saddle, the “Iron Seat”—has rapidly developed into a flourishing town of over 12,000 inhabitants, though it is possible that its trade and importance will be injured by the retrocession of Kuldja and the upper part of the Ili valley to China. In the district around many thriving Russian and Cossack colonies have been planted, and it is to this region that we must understand reference to be made when we hear of emigration from the Don and the Volga to “Turkestan.”

Neither the climate, the life, nor the scenery of Semiretchensk, however, partakes in any degree of the char-

acteristics of Turkestan, though the advances of Russia in this quarter in 1853 were simultaneous with her earliest conquests on the Sir Daria, and the two provinces were in 1867 incorporated, for reasons that had official weight, in the new governor-generalship, which, with its headquarters at Tashkend, has so long been administered by General Kaufmann. Vierny itself is described by Schuyler as essentially a Siberian town, with wide and regular streets, shops with glaring and picturesque signs, large official buildings of brick, dirty little hotels, and a curiously mixed population of Asiatic races—Sarts, Tartars, Kirghiz, Kalmuks, and Chinese. Saw-mills, brick-kilns, distilleries, and breweries, technical and primary schools, public gardens, and dancing assemblies, bear token to the influence of European ideas; while Chinese merchants in flowered silks and cottons, and Kalmuk herdsmen with queues and brown faces, riding on oxen, tell of the neighbourhood of the Celestial Empire.

Not far from Vierny is Uzan-Agatch, where, in October 1860, Kolpakofsky, with eight hundred men, inflicted a crushing defeat on a Khokandian force of nineteen thousand, which had marched through the passes of the range on the south side of the valley in order to oust Russia from the Ili. The only result was that the victors, following up their advantage, crossed the mountains and seized from the ruler of Khokand the region about Lake Issyk-kul and the course of the river Chu—thus taking a long step towards the appropriation of the Central Asian khanates. Issyk-kul lies five thousand three hundred feet above sea-level—a beautiful blue expanse of water, over one hundred miles in length, wedged in between two lofty ranges of the Tian Shan,

and fed by numerous streams that flow down from its glaciers. The neighbourhood of the lake is almost deserted, except by roving parties of the Kara Kirghiz, a tribe of much purer Tartar lineage than their brethren of the steppes beneath—the Kirghiz Kaisaks of the three Hordes, with whom we have already made acquaintance. Sculptured remains of ancient cities have, however, been found on its shores, and for miles along the margin at one place the beach is thickly strewn with skulls and fragments of human bones, marking, say the tribesmen, the site of a bloody battle now forgotten.

Passes lead from this point over the main ridge of the Tian Shan into Eastern Turkestan, and these have been seized by the Russians, who have for many years had munitions of war collected at Fort Naryn, near the summit of the range, in expectation of troubles with YakooB Beg or his successors the Chinese. The culminating peak of this great mountain system, Mount Khan Tengri, lifts its head far into the snows at no great distance south-east of Issyk-kul; and close under it runs the Muzart Pass, by which a precarious communication was kept up by a road carried over glaciers, moraines, and yawning fissures, crossed by temporary wooden bridges, between the Chinese possessions on the Ili and in Kashgar.

The Chu River, rising among the snows of these terrific defiles, flows close past the western end of the lake, and communicates with it by an arm, which is sometimes an effluent and sometimes an affluent of Issyk-kul, and then makes its way through rocky and precipitous gorges, with an occasional border of flowery

meadows and clumps of forest, into the bare steppes below. As it bends westward along the skirts of the Alexandrofsky range, it receives many little tributaries that stream down the slopes and recruit its failing waters before they are finally lost in the sands, or in swampy brakes of rushes, where tigers and lynxes have their haunts.

This is a classic ground. Here are the "Thousand Springs" of the Chinese geographers; through it led the highway by which the medieval travellers passed eastward on their way to the court of the Great Khan. It was the centre of the power of the Kara Khitai, whose rule extended over both Eastern and Western Turkestan, and whose capital, Bala Sagun, stood near the banks of the Chu. That more than half-mythical personage, Prester John, is believed to have been a khan of the Kara Khitai, who may have professed Christianity at the time that the Nestorian faith extended widely over Central Asia and China. Genghiz Khan, emerging into the Ili valley from the deserts of Mongolia, took this way, and threw in the dust the power of Prester John, as he did greater and lesser potentates that tried to withstand his conquering march. Near Tokmak are the ruins of the capital of the principality of Kipchak, which furnished the name for all the western conquests of the Mongols. Aulieta, the principal town of the district, is supposed to be on the site of Talas, another great city of the descendants of Genghiz. Near it is a mountain where Noah's ark is thought to have rested, and mounds and piles of immense stones; believed to have been built by the "jins;" and within is a sacred tomb, in great repute among the followers of the

Prophet, built over the bones of a descendant of Sheik Akhmed Yasavi, the patron saint of the Kirghiz, in whose honour Timur built the great mosque that is the pride of the city of Turkestan. It was at Aulieta that General Tcherniaieff began his campaign against Khokand in 1864, which ended within a few weeks in the capture of Tashkend and the annexation of the greater part of the khan's territory; and General Kaufmann had it at one time seriously in his mind to fix here the capital of the Russian possessions in Central Asia.

Still, so long as we are on the northern side of the Alexandrofsky Mountains, we are outside the magic circle of Turkestan. A current of Western life and ideas flows here; Russian colonization has spread along the well-watered hill-sides, and well-to-do farmers come down to market at Aulieta, dressed in the garb and speaking the tongues of Europe; the climate is healthful and invigorating; even the Kirghiz, to one who, like Schuyler, has been sojourning among the fanatical peoples to the south, appear "patterns of simplicity, manliness, and virtue."

A journey through the passes or across the steppe into the valley of the Sir brings us to a new world—into an atmosphere charged with doubt, mystery, and suspicion. In this region Russia has now planted down her foot firmly, and made her presence felt in the most remote corner. The boundaries of Western Turkestan are marked out very plainly by nature. To the eastward it is defined by the huge wall of the Tian Shan and the Pamir Steppe—the outward supports of the great table-land of Thibet and Chinese Tartary. Near the sources of the Amu River is a mountain knot,

where the Pamir, the Western Himalayan ranges, and the Hindoo Koosh join; and at this point also is the meeting-place of the Chinese dominion, of the Afghan possessions in Turkestan, and of the territory of the Maharajah of Kashmir, who is under the protection of the Empress of India. On the south the limits of Turkestan are marked by the Hindoo Koosh, which gradually merges into the Kopet Dagh range of mountains, separating Northern Persia from the Turcoman Oasis, and extends to the shores of the Caspian Sea.

Thus shut in on two sides by lofty mountains, Turkestan is bounded on the west by the waters of the Caspian, and on the north by the steppes pastured by the Kirghiz. The general character of the region thus shut off from the rest of the world by rocky walls, deserts, and salt water is that of a waste of sand, shifting and barren like the sea. Great peninsulas and promontories jut out from the bounding mountain masses into this ocean of sand, and oases of marvellous fertility, brilliantly green with fruit trees and grain fields, are dotted on its surface like islands.

The rivers rise in the uplands—at the foot of glaciers, or in little mountain tarns surrounded by snow all the year round. Such is the source of the Oxus or Amu Daria, found by Captain John Wood in the Sari-kul Lake, situated at a height of sixteen thousand feet above sea-level, in one of the most remote corners of the Pamir Steppe. Descending from these cold naked heights on the “Roof of the World,” where, owing to the great elevation, even breathing is a difficulty, the muddy and rapid streams cut their way through narrow valleys to the lower levels. Numerous side gorges join the main

channel ; and wherever there is room for plants to grow, there is a rich vegetation, and a little tribal community maintaining itself on its flocks and herds, and, when opportunity offers, on those of its neighbours.

This is particularly the case in the district of the Upper Oxus, which is still imperfectly explored—or at least imperfectly described. Russian scientific expeditions have penetrated into the broken and difficult region of Karategtin and Hissar, and jottings of the routes taken and the places visited have reached geographical circles in Europe ; but the remark which Vilkievitch, the Czar's agent at Kabul, made to Sir A. Burnes forty years ago still holds good : “ It is not the custom of Russia to publish to the world the results of her researches in foreign countries.” Trade routes ascend these intricate valleys, and surmount the ridges of the broad blocks of mountain that separate the Amu from the Zerafshan, and the Zerafshan from the Sir, sometimes at heights of ten thousand and twelve thousand feet above the sea ; but the merchants and travellers who have business to do in the great marts of traffic in Turkestan prefer coasting along the foot of the hills by tracks comparatively safe, and beaten by the feet of camels and horses, to undertaking the toilsome ascents of the passes, and submitting to the black-mailing of robber-chiefs.

Farther westward the mountains sink down to the level of the plain, or are continued merely as ranges of low dusty hills. The last drop of water has been wrung from the highlands, and the rivers are left without guidance to wander forth into the desert. In places where there is a clay subsoil to retain the rains, little patches



of green are found in the thirsty plain, and wells are dug, around which the kibitkas of roaming tribesmen are pitched, and where the trade caravans crossing the Kizil Kum or Kara Kum—the “Red” and the “Black” Sands—make their evening halt.

Strips of cultivated land, vineyards, and groves of fruit-trees are found on the banks of the streams where it is found possible to draw off the water by canals for purposes of irrigation. A dusty vegetation of camel-thorn and other desert plants covers large expanses, and affords pasturage for the flocks of hardy sheep, camels, and horses kept by the Turcoman and other nomadizing tribes. Herds of wild asses also frequent the waste: Mr. O'Donovan, accompanying General Scobleff's recent expedition to the Tekke country, described a countless host of these graceful creatures bearing suddenly down upon him with the swiftness of the wind, and having satisfied their curiosity by surveying him at a distance of some yards, wheeling round and disappearing as swiftly as they came in the cloud of dust raised by their nimble heels. Lions, which were hunted in this region in Alexander the Great's time, are no longer found, except, perhaps, that one may make an occasional foray into the desert from Northern Persia; but tigers of small size, bears, wolves, and several species of antelopes manage to pick up a living.

Nearer the Caspian the rivers disappear, and with them almost every sign of life; the country becomes utterly naked and desolate. Great changes must have come over the physical condition of this region within the historical period. The part which this region has played in the history of the world seems inexplicable

except on the supposition that it once was capable of supporting a much larger population than it now contains.

The positive statements of ancient geographers, that the Oxus and Jaxartes emptied themselves into the Caspian, have also opened a rich field for theory and conjecture. We know now, of course, that both these great rivers—each with a course of some fifteen hundred miles—debranch into the shallow Sea of Aral, which, in spite of its great length and breadth—two hundred and sixty-five miles by one hundred and forty-five miles—is little more than an overgrown lagoon of the steppe. The other rivers of what was known to our fathers as Independent Tartary have not even so honourable an end to their career as the Aral Sea.

The Zerafshan, for instance, hurries with much noise and turbulence down its rough mountain channels, and sets out briskly from the hills as if to join the Amu. Then the hot sands begin to drink up its waters and to choke its bed with silt; streams are carried away to irrigate the rice-fields and apple and peach orchards of Samarcand and Bokhara; the river spreads itself abroad in devious and intricate channels, and stagnates in marshes and pools, and it is completely exhausted while its apparent goal is still many miles distant. It is the same with the rivers that flow into the hollow of Turkestan from the Hindoo Koosh. The rivers of Khulm and of Balkh exhaust themselves in the gardens of these two ancient Bactrian cities; the Siripul and the river of Meimana water the oases on their banks, but have not strength left to cross the desert beyond; the Murghab loses itself a little way beyond

Merv, the dilapidated old metropolis of Margiana; and the Heri-rud, the river that flows past Herat, descends from the hills to the plain only to dissipate itself in the Tejend swamp. So also in the north, the steppe rivers shoal and throw off branches instead of deepening and receiving tributaries as they flow onward; they stumble aimlessly about among mud-flats, sandy hillocks, and beds of rushes, and end, after a course of hundreds of miles, in some insignificant salt marsh.

It is conjectured, with much probability, that these fragmentary streams once formed parts of one grand river system. The theory is that when the climate of Turkestan was moister than it is to-day, and the rainfall, of course, heavier and more regular, the great lake Issyk-kul sent a large body of water into the bed of the Chu, keeping the channel of that now useless stream well scoured and running full; that a further reinforcement came, perhaps, from Lake Balkash, bringing the surplus drainage of the Ili valley, while the Sari-Su and other rivers now lost in the Kirghiz Steppe flowed in further on. A still more important contributor was found in the Jaxartes, which is believed to have joined the main stream near where Fort Perovsky now stands, and the further course of the united body of water is still marked by the Yani Daria, a channel through the sands of Kizil Kum, down which in flood-time part of the water of the Sir still flows straight towards the Oxus. The last-named stream was the lowest and greatest of the affluents of the ancient river; and it then held its way from the southern extremity of the Sea of Aral to the Caspian Sea at Balkan Bay, through the deep wide furrow in the sands known as the Usboi,

or old course of the Oxus, down which the Russians are just now said to be endeavouring to induce the waters to resume their flow, in the hope of opening up water communication with their new possessions in Khiva, Bokhara, and Khokand.

It is more than doubtful whether this curious experiment will be successful. They may persuade, indeed they have already persuaded, a considerable body of water to leave the Oxus and flow for some distance along the dry bed of the old river; but it is quite another thing to get it to discharge itself into the Caspian, much more to preserve such a depth of channel that vessels could ascend. The trunk stream that once may have given freshness to the desert is hopelessly withered and dead, and only in some of the outer twigs and boughs does the sap still run. The Amu Daria, according to the late Major Herbert Wood, who made a minute hydrographical survey of the region, is rapidly silting up its bed, owing to the quantity of water drawn off to irrigate the oases of Khiva, and is finding increasing difficulty in travelling even so far as the Aral Sea. The Sir also, in its lower course, divides into narrow, tortuous channels, and is so obstructed by mud and sand banks as to be nearly unnavigable.

The Sea of Aral itself is filling up, clear water, bays, and inlets changing to marshes, and marshes to dry land, within living memory. Its shores are utterly deserted except by water-fowl. On the east, sandy beaches covered with shallow pools shelve into the brackish waters, and on the west, the low shingly bluffs of the Ust-urt plateau run out into the lake. On a fine day beautiful atmospheric effects may, according to Schuyler,

be seen, when, with a pale blue sky and fleecy clouds overhead, the sun lights up the clear pools of water and shore and sea with silver and pearly hues, and the coloured stems of the low leafless shrubs give to the desert an aspect of purple, rose, and yellow, mingling with the yellow-brown of the sands. There is nothing else, however, admirable about Aral: it is subject to heavy storms, and possesses no harbour of refuge for the vessels of the "Aral flotilla," conveyed thither in pieces, and launched at an enormous cost to the Russian Government; and the officers of the little fleet must have found this most isolated of naval stations neither so lively nor so serviceable for purposes of war or commerce as was at one time expected.

What Turkestan needs in order to regain its past prosperity is a moister and more equable climate, a more regular rainfall, and a more industrious population. In these respects, it may be feared, things are retrograding rather than improving. For many generations past it has been in "reduced circumstances." After remaining long in obscurity, a flood of light has been poured in upon it at the moment of collapse and humiliation. Its former glory was won by ruthless, predatory warfare, and it became rich and powerful on the spoils of weaker neighbours. Now it is being plundered and annexed in its turn. A few of the more isolated mountain tribes and Turcoman clans may still kidnap and rob on a petty scale, but their power for evil is every year being circumscribed. The time for conquest and slaughter on the grand scale seems to be past; Timurs and Babers are no longer bred in the *Mavera-ul-Nehr*—the "land between the rivers." The khans of Tartary remind us

of nothing more than the giants Pope and Pagan, who sat at the entrance of their dens surrounded by the bones, ashes, and blood of dead men, biting their nails in impotent rage as Bunyan's pilgrims passed by. Not only can destroying hosts no longer issue like clouds of locusts from these deserts and spread terror and desolation to the gates of Moscow, Smyrna, and Delhi; the khans must submit to see the stranger and the infidel pass by their gates with richly-laden caravans, and dare not lay a finger upon him.

The first clear glimpse obtained into the interior of this region is afforded by the famous expedition led thither by Alexander the Great more than two thousand two hundred years ago. The Macedonian conqueror passed the Hindoo Koosh with his army, hunted the fugitive Persian satrap Bessus across the Oxus—which was crossed, as is still sometimes done at the present day, on skins—and, after laying waste Maracanda, the modern Samarcand, and other towns, advanced as far as the banks of the Sir. Here he left a colony of his invalided soldiers—one of half a dozen Alexandrias planted as memorials of the Greek conquests in Sogdiana and Bactria; and he had sundry brushes with the Scythian hordes on the northern bank of the stream, which the flatterers of the conqueror declared to be the Don, a geographical discovery as remarkable as that afterwards made by Alexander himself when he pronounced the Indus to be the Nile, on the strength of seeing crocodiles swimming in the Indian river. The Padishah Iskender is to this day one of the great mythical personages of Central Asia; legends regarding him hang about the mountains, lakes, and rivers of Turkestan; many of the

chiefs still trace their descent to him ; and the Khokandians point out at Marghilan the tomb where, as they believe, the horned hero lies buried. The Bactrian kingdom that he founded survived for several centuries, and coins bearing the names of a long line of monarchs—Heliocles, Eucratides, and the rest—and silver plate engraved with Bacchic processions and other subjects taken from classic mythology, are still found in Kunduz, Balkh, and Badakshan, to attest the degree of culture attained in this distant colony of the Greeks.

The Scythians on their way to the Indus overwhelmed the Bactrian empire ; and Persians, Parthians, and Chinese by turns asserted their supremacy. Then came the Arabs of the Khalifate, who early in the eighth century proselytized busily with fire and sword, and planted the roots of Mohammedanism so deeply that to this hour the most orthodox champions of Islam are to be found in the medressahs of Khiva and Samarcand, and Bokhara is accounted one of the holiest cities of the Mussulman world.

Hitherto the countries on the Oxus and Jaxartes had had no title to the name of "Turkestan." They had mainly been peopled and governed from the south, and the predominant races are believed to have been of Iranian origin. But now began a current of emigration and conquest from another quarter. The Seljukian Turks burst in from the north-east, and traversing the land from corner to corner, selected as the seat of their power Khorassan, behind the mountain screen of Northern Persia. Here their renowned leaders, Togrul Beg and Alp Arslan, engaged in tremendous struggles for mastery with the Turcomans of the steppes, and with the succes-

sors of Mahmoud of Ghuzni, the son of a Bokharan slave, who had just conquered India, and carried away to his rock-fortress in Afghanistan the "Great Gates" of Delhi, brought back in triumph eight centuries later by a British army.

The shahs of Kharezm—the modern khanate of Khiva—had established themselves at Samarcand as the ruling power in Turkestan, when the horde of Genghiz was on the march. The proud Kharezmian shah, disdaining the offered alliance of the Mongol chief, was defeated and slain; his capital was laid waste and his people massacred, and the remnants of his army were chased through the Afghan passes and across the Indus. When Genghiz parted Asia among his sons, Turkestan fell to the share of Jagatai; but as is often the case in family settlements where there is a large property to divide, the heirs were not contented with their portions. Long and cruel wars were waged between the Jagataides and their strong kinsmen and neighbours, the lords of the Golden Horde.

The family quarrel was brought to an issue in the time of the notorious Timur Leng (Timur the lame—corrupted by our forefathers into "Tamerlane"). This formidable personage was an almost perfect type of the Tartar conqueror—insatiably ambitious, of indomitable will and energy, brave and skilled in warfare, utterly ruthless in the shedding of human blood, the idol of a savage soldiery, and the terror of the world. In the case of the other great figures in Central Asian history before and after his time, Turkestan was only the starting-place whence they set out to seek their fortunes in other lands; or it was a prize which, coming from Greece,



Persia, or Mongolia, they struggled to reach. But Timur was born in the *Mavera-ul-Nehr*—at *Shehr-Sebz*, no long distance south of *Samarcand*—and after all his marchings and wanderings, his campaigns against *Tokhtamish* on the *Sir*, on the *Volga*, and in the *Caucasus*, his expeditions to the *Dnieper* and the *Oka*, his two descents into the plains of *India*, and his still more bloody, loudly-trumpeted victories in *Persia*, *Syria*, and *Asia Minor*, he returned to his dearly-loved capital among the fruit-groves of the *Zerafshan* valley, and died “between the rivers” when about to set out for the conquest of *China*. The pillage of the rich countries to the south and west was lavishly expended in rearing and beautifying the palaces, mosques, and colleges of *Samarcand*, which under his care became the centre of power and learning in the Eastern world. Another flood of invasion from the northern steppes sapped and overthrew the rule of the successors of Timur in *Bokhara* and *Khokand*. The famous Baber was prince of the latter province, then known as *Ferghana*, and twice he established himself in *Samarcand*; but with all his military genius and political skill he was unable to withstand the onset of *Sheibana* and his *Uzbegs*, and fleeing by the familiar road through *Afghanistan* to *India*, he became the founder of the *Mogul* empire.


The subsequent history of *Turkestan* has largely consisted of struggles for ascendancy between the three khanates, civil wars, and family quarrels, plots, and murders. There has been no successful organized assault by its warlike people either on *Russia* or on *India*. The last—perhaps the last possible—of the great “scourges of humanity” reared in these deserts was *Nadir Shah*,

a Turcoman freebooter, who, less than a century and a half ago, overthrew the Persian and Mogul empires, and was assassinated in the height of his fame while returning, after the manner of his kind, laden with spoils of Delhi and the Punjab.

As a fellow-countryman of Nadir's, following the same esteemed occupation of highwayman, regretfully told Colonel Baker in 1873,—“Things are changed: we cannot stand against your new guns; and we have no training.” The tide of Russian conquest is rolling swiftly back upon the countries of Turkestan, and promises soon to engulf the whole. Let us see when this encroaching movement began, and how far it has already extended.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### LATEST CONQUESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA.

USSIA hesitated long before venturing her hand into this Central Asian wasp's nest, which she is now engaged in rifling, with more prospect of getting stings than honey.

The learned Professor Grigorief shows that there were commercial relations and interchanges of missions between Muscovy and the khanates so far back as 1620. The early military expeditions of Russia in this quarter were directed against Khiva, and were not attended with encouraging results. Peter the Great sent a small army to subdue the Khivan khan; but the latter, though unable to overcome the enemy in the field, was more than a match for him in artifice, and Prince Bekovitch and his men were massacred or perished miserably in the desert between Lake Aral and the Caspian. A force under Perovsky, despatched by Czar Nicolas in 1829, met with even more signal failure—they had not even a barren victory to repay them for their sufferings in attempting to cross the steppes in winter. The excellent people of Khiva, besides quarrelling with the neighbour khanates, continued merrily the old-fashioned practices of piracy and robbery, dreaming that the arm of retribu-

tion was not long enough to reach across the desert. Stray Russians were picked up by them, or by these professional adepts in kidnapping, the Turcomans, until there was quite a considerable collection of subjects of the Czar pining in slavery.

At last, after hesitating for one hundred and forty years on the northern side of the Kirghiz Steppe, Russia determined to stride across it, and see with her own eyes what was going on in the strange world of Turkestan. This momentous movement was so far completed in 1847 that a Russian fort was built on the Sir Daria—some four hundred miles from the old frontier near Orsk—and two vessels were placed on the river. No determined opposition was offered by the Kirghiz, though an irregular struggle was kept up for ten years longer by the bandit chief Isset Kutebar, “the Rob Roy of the steppe,” from places of refuge in the plateau of Ust-urt. The post road across the steppe from Orsk to the Sir is now practically as safe as a European highway. Station-houses, for resting and change of horses, are placed at convenient distances along the route, and the traveller is made as comfortable as is consistent with the presence of filth and fleas. The Kirghiz are settling quietly down to pastoral pursuits, and along the Sir they are beginning to cultivate the land. Projects have been formed of bridging over the distance between Orenburg and Tashkend by a railway, and were the finances of Russia, and especially those of the government of Turkestan, in a more healthy state, the work would no doubt soon be carried out.

Once established on the Jaxartes, Russian annexations in Turkestan went on by a kind of natural process. The

junction was a favourable one for such encroachments. There was bad blood between the khanates, as usual, and Khokand, the nearest of the three, was torn by civil commotions. Kipchak, Uzbeg, and Sart factions alternately struggled into power, and the Khan Khudayer was a vicious and bloodthirsty creature—judged even by the Central Asian standard—who murdered his minister and best friend, the Kipchak chief Mussulman Kuli, and was repeatedly turned out of the throne by his disgusted subjects. The Russian conquests began in 1853 by the capture of Ak Musjid—now Fort Perovsky—after a resolute defence by the celebrated Yakoo Beg, who afterwards crossed the Tian Shan with a band of Khokandians, and became the ruler of Eastern Turkestan.

On the lower Sir the climate is rigorously cold; the river is hemmed in between sandy deserts, and is frozen for four months in the year. Better things were to be found farther up stream. Under the shelter of the mountains was the valley of Ferghana, with its running streams and its fruit-groves, the pears, melons, and grapes of Andijan, and the delicious apricots and pomegranates of Marghilan, celebrated by the Emperor Baber. Turquoises and other precious stones, gold dust, and copper ore were to be found; and the populous towns of Tashkend, Khojend, and Khokand were famous in Central Asia for their manufactories of rich cloths and their workers in brass and jewellery.

Beyond these mild inviting regions, lying so temptingly near at hand, were places of still greater interest—Samarcand, Bokhara, Khiva, and Merv—about which the English had been manifesting much curiosity. A long series of British travellers—Moorcraft, Burnes, Ab-

bott, Thomson, Shakespeare, Connolly, Stoddart, and Wolff—had penetrated into the region, and gathered great store of information. Russian travellers were not behind in enterprise and daring. Demaisons visited Bokhara in 1834 in the dress of a Tartar mullah, and Vikievitch in the year following disguised as a Kirghiz,—feats that, as M. Grigorief points out, demanded no less boldness and adroitness than the Hungarian Vámbéry's more recent visit made in the disguise of a dervish. In 1841, about the time that Connolly and Stoddart were basely murdered at Bokhara, by the Ameer Nasrullah, Khanikoff and Lehmann made an interesting journey to Samarcand, which had remained almost totally unknown to Europeans since the time of Timur.

Service in Turkestan became popular in the Russian army; it opened up to young officers prospects of "showing their paces" and obtaining promotion, honours, and decorations. Tchernaiëff, Scobelev, Romanofsky, Lazareff, and other notable military commanders, made their reputation—some of them afterwards lost it—in Central Asian campaigns. So far from the seat of government, civil and military officials were necessarily left with a large amount of discretion, and they took large advantage of their opportunities of spreading their own and the White Czar's fame.

After nibbling away for years morsels of Khokand, General Tchernaiëff, in the campaigns of 1864–66, captured the cities of Turkestan, Tchimkend and Tashkend, and stripped Bokhara of the conquests which it had made from its rival khanate in the hour of its extremity; and his successor, Romanofsky, followed up these advantages by advancing into Bokharan territory, inflicting a signal

defeat on the troops of Mozaffur Eddin at Irjar, and established Russian garrisons at Ura-tepé, Jizakh, and other places south of the Sir. General Kaufmann was nominated Governor-General of Turkestan in 1867, with the city of Tashkend as his headquarters; and next year another war broke out with Bokhara, resulting in the annexation of Samarcand and the Zerafshan valley, and the political subjection of the rest of that khanate to Russia. In 1875 there was a last despairing effort by the Khokandians, led by Abdurrahman Aftobatcha, the son of Mussulman Kuli, to eject the intruders, but after a fierce struggle the resistance was thoroughly quelled by Scobelegg; and in 1876 the remaining portion of Khokand was formed, under the ancient title of Ferghana, into a province of Russian Turkestan.

For fifteen years past the progress of the Russian arms and influence in Central Asia has been presided over by General Kaufmann.\* No name has been so much identified with Muscovite aggrandizement in this region, and no one has copied more faithfully the morals and the methods of Asiatic rulers in the management of an Oriental dependency. He has never shown any surpassing genius either for war or for diplomacy. His position, however, far removed from effective control, with the whole power of the empire behind him, and a tempting field for ambition in the weak and distracted countries lying in front, has given him a great influence for good or for evil, which he has scarcely used in the way best fitted to enhance the reputation of Russia for open dealing, or to improve the relations between his

\* General Kaufmann has just (May 1882) been superseded by General Tcherniaieff as Governor-General of Turkestan.

country and our own. The Governor-General of Turkestan has been the type of the "prancing proconsul" of the time; at Tashkend he has maintained a semi-regal state and ceremonial, which has gained for him among the native populations the title of the Yarim Padishah, or "half king." He never rides out, Mr. Schuyler was informed, without a select guard of Cossacks; and even his wife and children had at one time their escorts, until a newly arrived officer turned the practice to ridicule by innocently asking why the lady was under arrest. At the public receptions to which the gay and fashionable world of Tashkend are admitted the etiquette of the Winter Palace is observed; and if the Governor-General condescends to shake the hand of a guest, the latter is immediately courted as a rising light in society. When his excellency returns after an absence to Tashkend, triumphal arches are erected and cannon fired in his honour.

In spite of these imposing displays—partly, perhaps, on account of them—the administration of the province is not so successful as could be desired. Turkestan, apart from the costs of the wars, entails a heavy annual drain on the finances of Russia, which are little able to bear the burden. The population are heavily taxed, and have other causes of discontent. The tone of morals in civil and military circles is not exalted. Peculation and jobbery are rife, and drinking and gambling fill up the spare hours in high society. There are generally flitting about the "court" a number of pensioners, or applicants for pensions, claimants and pretenders to Central Asian crowns, or dethroned or expelled ameers and khans, of which there is always a large supply on hand. Khu-



dayar Khan of Khokand had to take shelter with General Kaufmann, but got tired of that sheltering wing, and took flight to India. Abdur Rahman, the present Ameer of Afghanistan, came here in 1870, after being expelled from Kabul by his uncle, the late Shere Ali. Afterwards he removed to Samarcand, where he lived quietly till a new turn of fortune's wheel carried him again to the top of affairs in Afghanistan, with no great feeling of gratitude in his heart, it is said, for the Yarim Padishah. General Kaufmann loves to play with these puppets, and in the alarm which their movements excite in India and England perhaps has his reward. The approach of Russia towards our Indian Empire has led to long correspondence and interchanges of opinion between our own Government and that of St. Petersburg, and in 1872 an arrangement was come to between Lord Granville and Prince Gortschakof by which Afghanistan was declared to be "outside of the sphere within which Russia should be called upon to exercise her influence." The Oxus was laid down as the boundary of the territories of the Ameers of Bokhara and Kabul, and of the legitimate influence of Russia and England, and a limit was set for the time to Kaufmann's ambition. This did not prevent him, in 1878—a time, however, when Russia and England were "diplomatically at war"—from sending the notorious Stoletoff mission to Kabul; and we have thus to thank him, in part, for the cost and trouble of the Afghan War, and the unfortunate Shere Ali, who died near the Oxus while fleeing for refuge to his faithless "friend," for the loss of his kingdom.

The new or Russian town of Tashkend, though the seat of government, is by no means a typical city of

Turkestan. Schuyler, viewing it first by moonlight, could scarcely believe that he was in Central Asia. "The broad dusty streets, shaded by double rows of trees; the sound of rippling water in every direction; the small white houses set a little back from the streets, with trees and a palisade in front; the large square full of turf and flowers, with a little church in the middle," all combined to give him the impression that he was in one of the quiet little towns of New York State! By daylight it resembled more a new prairie town—"Denver, for instance, though lacking in the busy air that pervades that place, and with Sarts, in turbans and gowns, in place of Indians and miners." The native town, however, presents an admirable abstract of all that is quaint, bizarre, and characteristic in Central Asian architecture and city life. We cannot do better than quote part of the excellent description of the American author:—

"The streets are rarely straight, and in rambling about the town we go up and down hill, turning to this side and that, sometimes between high walls, sometimes beneath the wooden portico of a mosque which mounts high in the air, now along the edge of some deep ravine, and now crossing some rushing stream on a low wooden bridge. Everywhere trees are leaning over the walls, for everywhere there are gardens, and we can leave the street and take a by-path up the edge of some stream where an old wooden mill-wheel is busily turning, and feel ourselves almost in a country nook. Sometimes we pass into the garden of some medressah or college, where are shady walks, and where the turf about a shady pond is covered with idlers from the town, for the pupils are mostly in their little rooms reading or reciting their

lessons. Outside the walls—and the town is about six miles across—the gardens extend for several miles. These gardens, which are thickly planted with trees, and at a distance entirely conceal the town, are still very beautiful, though they have suffered greatly since the Russian occupation. Beyond the gardens we find the open steppe, which stretches from the Sir Daria, here some forty miles distant, to the mountains.”

Such another city of closely-packed buildings of clay and of wood, surmounted by the melon-shaped domes of mosques and medressahs, covered with blue and white enamelled tiles forming texts from the “Koran,” and half hidden in the brilliant green of gardens and orchards, is Khokand, though the population, some sixty thousand, is only half as large as that of Tashkend.

Neither of these places can lay claim to exceeding antiquity, or possesses any structure of such note and sanctity as the ruined mosque, begun by Timur in 1397, built over the tomb of the patron saint of the Kirghiz, the Sheik Akhmed Yasavi, in the decayed old town of Turkestan. This building, still grand in its decay, must, we are told, have been at one time wondrously beautiful. The front consists of an enormous arched portal, at least one hundred feet high, flanked by rounded windowless towers with crenellated tops. Under the great dome is a vast hall, ornamented with rich alabaster and mosaic work, after the Moorish style; and in adjoining apartments are the tombs of the saint, of the descendants of Timur, and of the Kirghiz sultans of the Middle and Little Hordes.

No spot in Central Asia, not even Bokhara, can, however, vie in interest with Samarcand. It is reached

from Tashkend by passing the Sir Daria at Tchinez, crossing a parched and arid waste known to the Russians as the "Famished Steppe," and entering the far-famed Zerafshan valley by a mountain pass—the "Gates of Tamerlane"—commanded by the fortress of Jizakh, from which Tcherniaeff was repulsed in 1866, but whose gates opened in the autumn of the same year to Kryzhanofsky, the governor-general of Orenburg. Beyond the defile, on the rocky walls of which are engraved inscriptions recording triumphs gained over invading hosts from the north by Timur's warlike grandson, Ulug Beg, and by the last of the great sovereigns and benefactors of Samarcand, Abdullah Khan of Bokhara, the valley of the Zerafshan—the "gold-strewing" river—is reached. The road leads through fields and gardens and numerous villages, and over streams crossed by ancient bridges; until, in the middle of the valley, the lofty blue domes and red brick towers of Samarcand are seen rising, as they have done for so many changeful centuries, above the green foliage of its fruit-trees.

Though it has long ceased to be the centre of the world, the city preserves some remains of its former magnificence. Among the common people its prestige is not quite gone. It is still accounted the "head of Islam;" and the proud saying is not yet forgotten among the faithful, "Samarcand is the face of the earth, Bokhara the marrow of Islam; were there not at Meshed an azure dome, the whole world would be a ditch for ablution." Meanwhile, it is only a small district town of some thirty thousand inhabitants, in an empire whose capital is four thousand miles away.

You enter the gate of Shah Zindeh—no Tartar spears—

men barring the way—and find yourself in a new boulevard, with an excellent pavement, where, like Mr. Schuyler, you may hire a drosky and drive to the citadel, where, in 1866, the Russian garrison, under Major Stempel, offered a heroic resistance to the attempt of the people of Shehr Sebz to recover the city. You look down on the great mosques and medressahs, the bazaars, canals, and water-tanks, planned and built by Timur and his successors; on the sea of verdure beyond, and across at the snow-covered mountains that hem in the valley; and acknowledge that Samarcand has not wholly been despoiled of her beauty and romance. The ameer's palace within the fortress has been turned into the Russian military hospital.

In the courtyard, formerly used on occasions of ceremony, is the *Koktash*, a block of gray marble, carved with arabesques, that, according to the tradition of the place, fell from heaven to form the foundation of the throne of Timur. The tomb of the Tartar conqueror is covered by a mosque that crowns a small hill on the south side of the citadel. Under the central dome, which is richly ornamented with alabaster work, and the walls inlaid with "hexagonal plates, closely set together, of finely carved transparent gypsum," is a slab of a greenish-black stone, six feet long, fifteen inches wide, and fourteen inches thick, covering the vault where this arch-destroyer, for whom the world once seemed too narrow, now lies gathered into very small space. Over the tomb, on the side towards Mecca, an ancient standard, with floating horsetail, hangs as a memento of his victories. Under adjoining slabs sleep Ulug Beg and other descendants of Timur, and an

honourable place beside him is occupied by his teacher, the learned Mir Seid Belki. The ashes of the wives of the conqueror are accommodated in an adjoining building.

The chief architectural glory of Samarcand is the mosque of Shah Sindeh, the "Living King," built by Timur on the spot where a great promulgator of the faith suffered martyrdom. By the local legend, the "Living King" was due to appear again in the flesh in 1868, to cleanse the city of the infidel, and his non-fulfilment of the appointment has rather injured his repute. The mosque, an immense structure, ranking in sanctity and splendour close after the Hazret Mosque at Turkestan, is now much out of repair; but the lofty portals and domes, faced with blue and white porcelain tiles forming mosaic patterns and texts, the marble and tiled staircases, the interior walls overlaid with arabesques, the arches and ceilings covered with pendent alabaster work, and the finely carved wooden pillars that support them, make it worthy of being a type of the palmy era of Samarcand. In the Mosque of Hodja Akbar was long preserved, as the most precious relic in the city, the Koran of Othman, the third khalif. The book has now been removed to the Imperial Public Library at St. Petersburg—a small instalment of historical revenge for Timur's act, the carrying away into Tartary the great library of Greek authors at Brussa, some traces of the existence of which Mr. Schuyler thought he discovered at Bokhara.

On a hill close by are the ruins of the Observatory—the first erected in Asia—founded by the "Shadow of the Almighty," Ulug Beg; and within the walls

are the crumbling remains, still surmounted by a minaret one hundred and fifty feet in height, of the college which that prince prepared as the home of the astronomers and mathematicians whom he attracted to his capital. In still finer taste are the other great medressahs of Samarcand—that of Bibi Khanym, built by and named after Timur's favourite wife, and daughter of the Emperor of China; and the colleges of Shir-dar and Tilla-kari, dating three hundred years later, erected by the Uzbeg, Yalang Tash, who rifled the shrine of the Imaum Reza at Meshed, in order to embellish his works in Samarcand.

The latter two buildings, as well as the Ulug Beg medressah, are in the centre of the bazaar. Here, as in the other bazaars of Central Asia, a most heterogeneous collection of different races assemble for trade and barter. A skilful ethnologist might find traces of the different waves of emigration and conquest which have passed over Turkestan in the dress, features, and customs of the people who crowd the narrow crooked alleys, or spend the night as well as the day in the little niches where their wares are exposed. The two great elements of the population are the Tajiks or Sarts and the Uzbegs: the former the representatives of the Iranian population who occupied the country before Turkestan became the "land of the Turks;" and the latter of the Turanian tribes that from time to time descended upon the basin of the Sir and the Amu since the days of Genghiz. Mr. Schuyler thus discriminates between the two races:—

"The Tajiks and Uzbegs are readily distinguished from each other, not only in appearance, but also in character. The Tajik is larger and fuller in person,

with an ample black beard; and an air of shrewdness and cunning. He is fickle, untruthful, lazy, cowardly, and boastful, and in every way morally corrupted. The Uzbek is taller and thinner, with a scanty beard, and a longer and more strongly-marked face. He is simple in his manners and dress; while the Tajik is devoted to his personal appearance, and fond of adorning himself. The Uzbeks look upon the Tajiks with contempt, but at the same time they are dependent upon them. The Tajiks treat the Uzbeks as fools and children of nature, and smilingly say that they have them entirely in their power."

The Tajiks constitute a large proportion of the town population, while the nomads are chiefly Uzbeks. The former speak a dialect of Persian, but most of them are also acquainted with Turki, the language of the Uzbek tribes. Other peoples, of whom representatives will be found in the bazaars, are Persians, Hindus, Jews, gipsies, and probably a sprinkling of Russians. A wandering dervish, known in Samarcand as a *kalendar*, a name delightfully suggestive of the "Arabian Nights," may be met with. He is making a round of the holy cities, and his next place of pilgrimage may be Bokhara.

Thither we will not follow him, for that metropolis of Central Asia, though dependent on Russia, not only politically, but for the life-streams of water from the Zerafshan that keep its fields and gardens green, has not yet been included within the dominions of the Czar. Neither has Khiva, though there is a widespread notion that the Cossacks are in actual possession of that Uzbek khanate. The khan, taking no warning from the fate



of his neighbours, and encouraging and profiting by the slaving and marauding propensities of his Turcoman subjects, it was determined in high council at St. Petersburg to put an effectual end to his power of annoyance.

The expeditions organized against him started in 1873, from five different points—from Jizakh, under Kaufmann's own command; from Kazala, on the Sir, under the Grand Duke Nicolas Constantinovitch; from the Emba, under General Verevkin; from Mangishlak, on the Caspian, under Lomakin; and from Tchikishlar, on the Attrek, under Markozoff; and they closed in on the khanate from the east, north, west, and south. All the difficulties lay in getting there, for by the nearest route there were four hundred miles of desert to cross. Many privations were suffered from heat and drought, and Markozoff's column had to fall back to the Caspian a miserable wreck. More than enough of men and guns and camels, however, reached the lower Oxus to beat down the feeble opposition of the khan, and Kharezm fell into the hands of the invaders. Afterwards the fertile portion of the oasis, lying on the south side of the river, was surrendered again to Mohammed Khan, while the desert northern bank was annexed to Turkestan, as the Amu Daria district.

While abolishing slavery, and taking other guarantees for the future good conduct of Khiva, Russia thus took care to reward herself for carrying out this part of her civilizing mission by placing herself in a position to exercise an all-powerful control over the native state. Her troubles and annexations in this part of the world did not, however, stop here. The Turcomans could hardly be expected immediately to reform their ways because

their old confederates and customers in Khiva had been bound and muzzled. The Yomud tribes, nomadizing between Khiva and the Caspian Sea, were thoroughly cowed by the primitive operations, disgraced by barbarous massacres "in the Circassian style," carried out by General Golovatchef; and the Goklan clans' on the Attrek have given comparatively little trouble.

Not so the Tekkes, whose two divisions, the Akhal and the Merv Tekkes, occupy respectively the fertile strip of country along the foot of the Kopet Dagħ range, and the oasis which the river of Herat forms before it is dissipated in the desert of Turcomania. These hardy, restless frontiersmen are possessed of an admirable breed of horses, with which they can cover great distances when out on their kidnapping and pillaging forays. They are more at home in their felt tents than in permanent habitations, and in the saddle than out of it. Robbing seems to come more natural to them than their ostensible occupations of shepherds and horse and camel rearers.

Rude in their manners and savage in their tempers, the English travellers who have visited the Tekke Turcomans—and, in addition to their most recent guest, Mr. O'Donovan, special correspondent of the *Daily News*, quite a series of officers in the Indian army, Colonels Baker and Macgregor, Major Butler, and Captains Napier and Gill, among others, have within the last few years taken the trouble of exploring the Tekke country—have discovered among them some primitive virtues, and especially a manly frankness and rough sense of humour that may be set against their manifold sins. The Persians do not appreciate them as neighbours; and "in their eyes," according to M. Ferrier, "a Persian is simply

a mercantile and marketable commodity, and not worth taking care of after it has been injured."

Seeing that Russia has spoiled their best market for these human wares, it is only natural that they should bear a special grudge against the northern infidel. Since the capture of Khiva, expeditions have been sent against them almost every year, each ending in more or less decisive failure. Markozoff, Lomakin, Tergukasoff, Dolgorouki, and Lazareff have in turn been discomfited by the valour of the Akhals and the hardships of the march. At length an expedition on a more extensive scale was fitted out, and placed under the command of General Scobeleff: to insure success, a railway, intended to extend across the desert from Krasnovodsk on the Caspian, at the foot of the mountains, was begun, and has since been completed to Kizil Arvat. The Tekke stronghold of Geok Tepe was captured in spite of a heroic defence, and the Turcoman oasis was added to the Empire of the Czars in the spring of 1881.

A treaty was concluded in the spring of 1882 between Persia and Russia, by which it was agreed that the frontier between their respective territories should be drawn along the lower course of the Attrek river and the range of the Kopet Dagħ eastwards to a point about a hundred and twenty miles from the Persian fortress of Sarakhs.

The new Russian outpost station of Askabad is in the neighbourhood of Nadir Shah's original stronghold, Kelat, a stupendous natural fastness, twenty-five miles in length by from five to seven broad, shut in by walls of rock from eight hundred to one thousand feet high, with a sheer perpendicular scarp between three hundred

and six hundred feet. On the other side of the mountains is the holy city of Meshed, where thirty thousand pilgrims assemble annually to visit the shrine of the Imaum Reza, and the mausoleum of the khalif of the "Arabian Nights," Haroun el Raschid; and not far off is Nishapur, the old capital of the Seljuk empire in Khorassan. Alp Arslan, the heroic figure of that dynasty, is buried at Merv, separated by a strip of desert from the new Russian frontier.

From the fertile oasis of Merv, according to one set of military critics, from Khorassan, according to others, a dash might be made at Herat—the "key" of India—by a designing enemy of England; while a third body of authorities are of opinion that Russia, from her position on the Oxus and in Bokhara, has for many years been in possession of the best available strategic base for carrying out the scheme, which she is so persistently suspected of entertaining, for invading and conquering Hindustan.

To the most Chauvinist of Russian generals, to the most nervous and credulous of Russophobists, the enormous difficulties and risks of such an undertaking must be manifest on any attempt to calmly consider the situation. Yet neither obstacles nor a wise regard for the real interests of Russia have hitherto availed to stop the progress of Russian arms in Central Asia. Should a collision take place on this distant frontier between two nations that need only to know each other more thoroughly in order to be friends and fellow-workers in restoring these Eastern countries to more than their former prosperity and civilization, it is only necessary to consider the contrast which the rivals present in all that con-

cerns the health and stability of their political, social, and commercial condition to judge which shall be the greater sufferer of the two. While the young Czar has just added to his overgrown dominions several thousand square miles of desert and several thousand head of Turcoman robbers, he dare not show himself outside the palace grounds of Gatchina. A hostile meeting in Asia would be a misfortune to Britain; it would probably be ruin to the Russian Empire.

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